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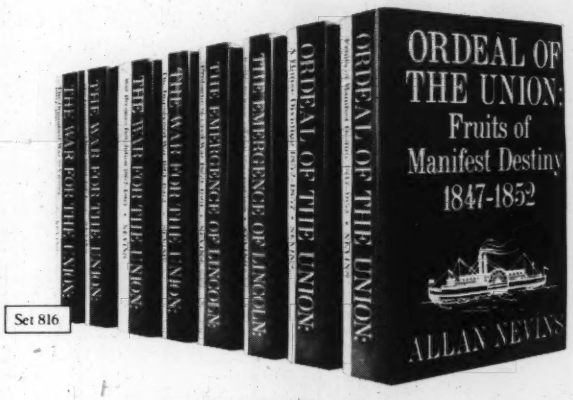

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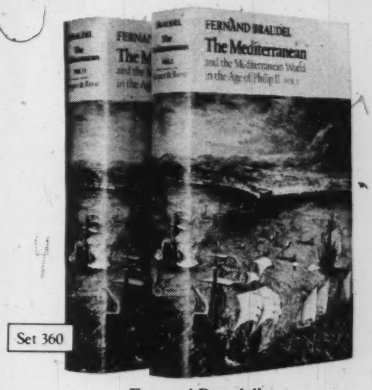

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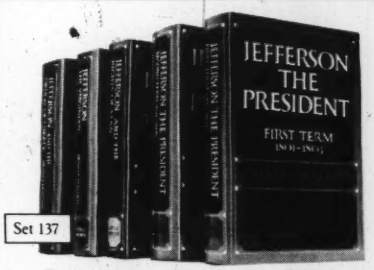

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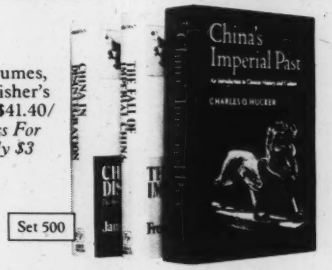

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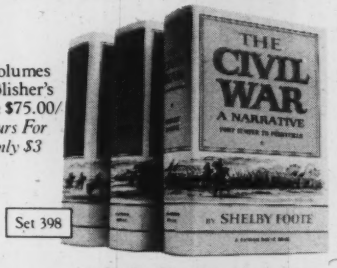

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AUGUST 19, 1977
VOLUME 9, NUMBER 4

New Times

Oppressor Israel?

"Wherever Jews settle," declares an Israeli businessman, "that is Israel." There are those, many of them Palestinians, who disagree. Prime Minister Begin's response? Let them eat sand.

By T.D. Allman
Page 22

The No Sweat Sweat Look

Adidas and armpits are this summer's fashion craze. What does it all mean?

By Paul Slansky
Page 28

The Cruel Aid Acid Quest

People are sleeping on dirt floors and enduring dysentery in the middle of the Mexican jungle in search of the ultimate trip—acid therapy. Ken Kesey never had it so bad.

By Craig Waters
Page 30

Gilda! America's Sweetheart!

What's all this talk we hear about Gilda Radner being America's sweathog? That's not a very nice thing to say and . . . What? Oh, *sweetheart*. Well, that's very different. Never mind.

By Tracy Young
Page 38

COVER
PHOTOGRAPH BY GEORGE OBREMSKI

An American Epic

The Public Burning is the year's best read, but Richard Nixon will like it even less than he did *The Final Days*.

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The streets are alive with the sound of looting.
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L.A.'s Record Plant mourns its genius.
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Would you believe—the sixties?
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LOOKING FOR A CAR WITH HEADROOM?

FORGET the domestic carmakers.

Last year, they stopped making convertibles. ("An end of an era," the national magazines said.)

Forget Volvo, Saab, Datsun, Toyota.

They don't take the trouble to make convertibles, either.

Forget Mercedes and Rolls.

They can stick on a price tag roughly equivalent to a one-family house in the suburbs.

Remember the car below. The Fiat 124 Sport Spider.

Its headroom, as you see, can be infinite. Its legroom, although a good deal less, is more than anybody except an NBA center needs. And it's wide enough so your elbowroom is pretty good, too.

Put your head inside and you'll see a 5-speed synchromesh gear box and an instrument panel that's more than a couple of idiot lights and something to get your cigarette going.

You see, the Fiat 124 Sport Spider, besides being one of the few convertibles left, is a true sports car.

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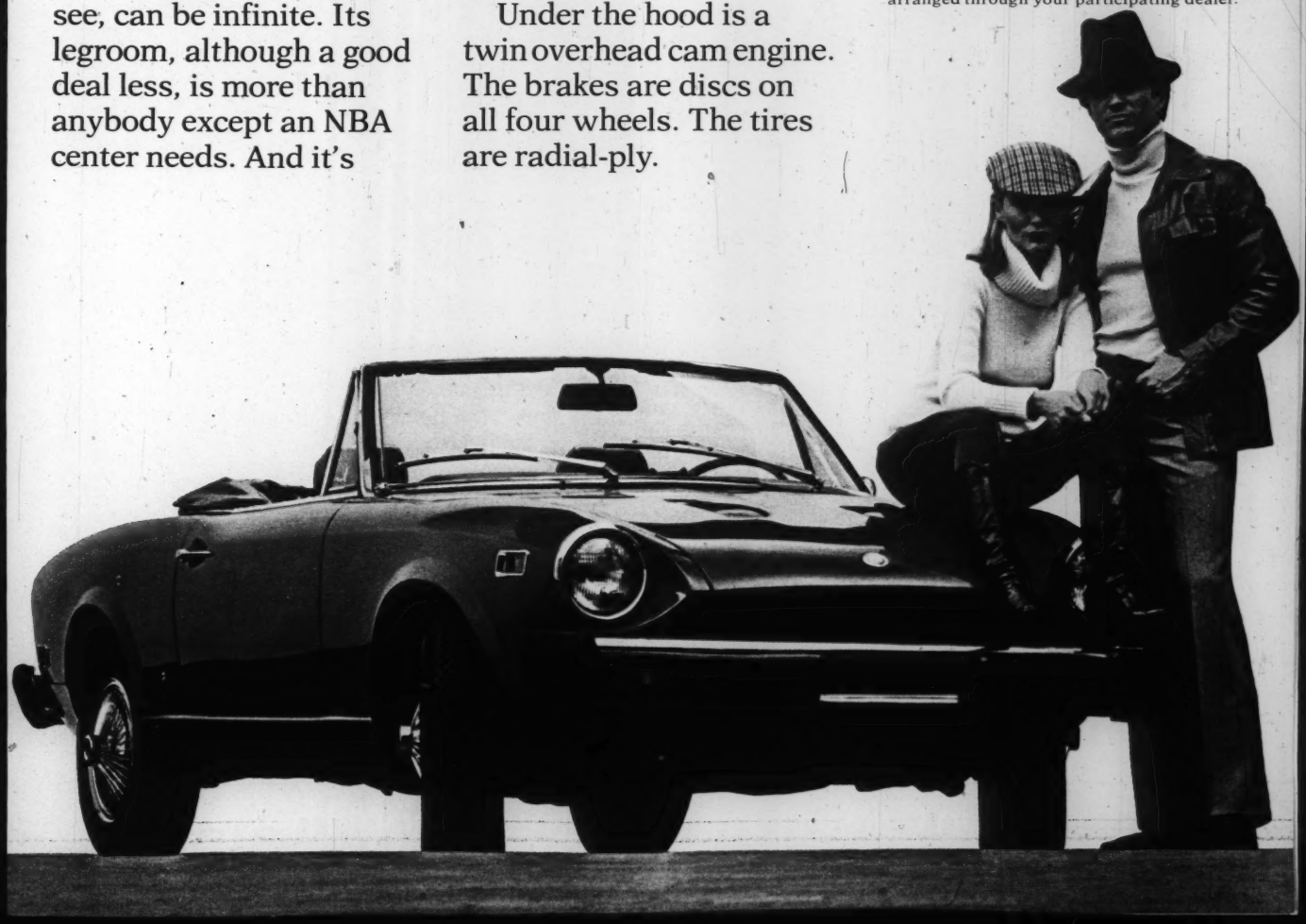

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Letters

$4 million scam

I read your most interesting article on cocaine in your July 22 issue ("Superdrug hits the supermarket") and thought you might be interested in what the federal government has been doing with regard to its use and abuse. On July 6, the National Institute on Drug Abuse announced the results of a four-year study on cocaine use by high school seniors, at a cost to taxpayers of $4 million. Some of the facts revealed were that there were 26 documented deaths due to cocaine use, that cocaine is *the* status drug, that the street price may run from $60 to $100 a gram, and that cocaine is more dangerous than marijuana.

On May 13, President Carter stated he intended to cut down on many of the useless surveys contracted by federal departments. Let's hope he keeps his promise.

Stuart Alan Rado
Executive Director, National Network of Youth Advisory Boards Inc.

Noted initials

Senator Moynihan hasn't necessarily gone Hollywood in objecting to the initials DPM (The Insider, July 8). During the East African campaign of World War I, serious supply shortages sometimes forced German officers to use copies of top-secret orders as toilet paper. This in turn enabled the chief of British intelligence to send out spies to retrieve the soiled documents from German latrines, thus producing valuable information on enemy movements. The intelligence officer referred to this practice as his "dirty paper method," always shortening it—with military passion for abbreviation—to "DPM." Maybe Senator Moynihan found out about it.

Charles Miller
New York City

Disavowal

I read with anger Dick Russell's article "Three Witnesses" (June 24). Russell called me twice, asking if I could assist him in obtaining information for a book he was writing concerning the CIA. I told him that I was not able to do so. He at no time indicated that he was writing an article about the Kennedy assassination. He asked me if I knew of George DeMohrenschildt, and I told him that I had never met DeMohrenschildt, or had heard of him prior to reading some recent articles mentioning DeMohrenschildt. Considering these facts, I would not have told Russell that Philip Harbin and DeMohrenschildt were the same man, which I again completely deny. It is shocking to me that Russell attributes information to me which is absolutely contradictory to what I did tell him.

Herbert Atkin
New York City

Dick Russell replies: I've checked my notes, and I stand by my story.

Bored with daffies

When I was fifteen, the sleeve notes on one of my surfing albums unlocked for me the mysteries of the surfing vernacular—what it meant to "hang ten," "shoot the curl" and all the rest. Now I'm 30, and suddenly I find the same stuff stuck in your "Skateboard Fever" article (July 22). Maybe I'm getting old, but it seems that in this day of neutron bombs, carcinogens, etc., the definitions of "apple turnovers" and "two board daffies" remain best-suited for the backsides of pop LPs.

Dennis E. Burke
Madison, Wisconsin

Young fools

Carter's seeming obsession with a balanced budget, his cop-out on jobs and welfare reform, made it clear to me that Andrew Young was the "token" to those who were fooled by the lies of the man who would never lie to us. But Robert Shrum's "Andy Young takes on the world" (July 8) injected me with a last dose of faith. Perhaps Carter is building the confidence of the business and military establishments so as to acquire a political base before he launches his *real* agenda. The chances are slim, but thanks to Andy Young, I'm not ready to concede.

Lou Siegel
Brattleboro, Vermont

Andy Young's abrasive approach may have the blessing, or tacit acceptance, of President Carter, but just how representative of the electorate is it? Does Young really expect our political rivals to change course because he, often justifiably, castigates them? Will criticism of our traditional allies for past misdeeds really enhance our standing with them?

Of course, it is exciting to see a departure from the usual diplomatic duplicity. But the acts of Andrew Young, not the flow of strident language, will prevail. I fear that when Young says he would not mind being fired, he may, for once, find general support from the public.

Alan F. Warwick
Little Ferry, New Jersey

Cork it

Andrew Kopkind was quite right that "the Smokey Bear types . . . were blissfully happy" with the Yosemite National Park pilot program of charging a nickle deposit for every can or bottle of beverage sold there ("How Vermont bottled up litter," July 8). Interior Secretary Cecil Andrus has announced that, since implementation, 30 tons of litter have been collected by rangers, compared to only one ton when no deposit was required. Now Andrus is extending this program to all the national parks.

S.K. Rukab
San Francisco, California

Le plus ça change

Robert Shrum's July 22 Party Lines column expertly described our government's attempts to turn back the clock to a time when "gay meant cheerful and the U.S. won all its wars." I don't agree, however, with his conclusion that "born-again Jimmy Carter may yet rescue America from the politics of spite." A man who schemes with other politicians about how to get funding for the neutron bomb is not the man, as Shrum states, who will lead America against the military-industrial complex or the rising tide of reaction.

Alan Krueger
Livingston, New Jersey

Gucci goo

Our richest apologies to Gucci's ("Read any good clothes lately?" June 24) for pricing one of their scarves a "respectable" $10, when it really carries an outrageous $60 tag.

The people at *New Times* would like to hear from you. Please write to Letters, New Times, One Park Avenue, New York, NY 10016. Letters are edited for space and clarity.

The fire this time

What would happen in a Boston blackout?

"I think we'd have just what New York did," says Mayor Kevin White, the last of the new-breed, liberal big city mayors of the 1960s.

How about Detroit?

"It would be much the same," reports Father Bill Cunningham, a Catholic priest who directs FOCUS: HOPE, a grassroots civil rights group that distributes 32,000 food packages a week in the Detroit ghetto.

From other great cities come similar answers. "There would be a *lot* of looting," predicts a Cleveland official. "They would hit the streets here," says a veteran of Chicago's Daley machine.

Yet New York's blackout trauma was more than simply a harbinger of what could happen elsewhere; it was a metaphor for the lights that have been going out all over urban America for ten years. The riots never really ended; in a lower key, they became the norm—a permanent state of violence, burning and sacking. On any given evening, seen from the air, the South Bronx looks like a war zone, its landscape dotted with buildings aflame; such fires have averaged ten a day there for the last two years. In U.S. cities everywhere, arson has become a favored form of mini-rioting. In Boston, Blue Hill Avenue looks a lot like the South Bronx. In Detroit, 56 miles of obsolete shopping streets are largely boarded up; litter blows across them like sagebrush on a Nebraska prairie.

On its downtown waterfront, Detroit boasts five gleaming new smokestack-shaped skyscrapers, a project optimistically called "The Renaissance Center." Such projects are the latest refuge of several declining cities, but as one Detroit official admits, "These things don't reach the poor; they don't improve their housing; they don't give them many jobs. They're mostly a symbol of hope." But the poor can't live by hope alone: six blocks from the Renaissance Center, at the Eastern Market, people can be seen every Saturday afternoon foraging through the garbage for food.

The men and women sifting the scraps, and millions of other Americans at or near their poverty level, helped give Jimmy Carter the votes that elected him president. They could depend on him: all their leaders told them so. So did Carter. Now the doubts have set in. Black leaders, strong Carter supporters all last year, this year have become his critics. Detroit Congressman John Conyers, a black, called a July 30 conference in Washington to discuss an "Administration agenda . . . that deeply troubles progressives." Urban League Director Vernon Jordan publicly blasted the President for "betraying" the poor, minorities and the cities. Soon thereafter, the NAACP's Benjamin Hooks joined the growing chorus.

UPI

Bronx looters: A right to steal?

Their voices accurately echoed the mood in the American black community. A CBS-*New York Times* poll reports that since January, Carter has lost a quarter of his approval rating among blacks.

Down on the ghetto streets, the Administration's visible performance so far seems to consist of a few extra summer jobs—and, incredibly, a cutoff of extended unemployment compensation. With unemployment declining nationally, extended compensation supposedly isn't needed. But the national jobless rate of "only" 7.1 percent translates into 15 percent in many cities—and over 50 percent in their worst sections. The cutoff left 2,000 people in Washington, D.C., and several thousand in Baltimore, most of them black, many of them heads of households, without income or work.

Jimmy Carter told the Urban League that his Administration is still new, that he has to have more time. He promised "a flood of programs." But one League official remains unimpressed. "It may be only six months," says the official, "but they've set the goal for the next four years: a balanced budget. How can you finance a flood of programs with a trickle of money?" Boston's Kevin White sees "nothing in the pipeline that will make any difference for the cities. After no funding for eight years from a Republican administration, the prospect of more of the same under the Democrats is frightening."

Mere symbols will not suffice: unemployed blacks can't cash Andy Young's paycheck. Summer jobs are not much help, either: 50 percent of the black men in Detroit have no work experience at all by the age of 25. "Summer jobs," a Cleveland planner says, "help some kids for two or three months, but the other ten months they're unemployed."

Real jobs, like a real urban program, would require nothing less than a comprehensive overhaul of federal policies and priorities. At present, labor law encourages industry to flee to the non-union South. Excess defense spending not only reduces the revenue available for domestic initiatives, but because of the concentration of Pentagon contractors in the sunbelt, it also transfers employment and income out of northeastern and midwestern cities. Associate Director Gil Maddox of FOCUS: HOPE thinks "the President should reread the Kerner Report. It's a fantastically good blueprint for the cities, but it would cost billions."

It was 1967 when that report warned of a society increasingly divided against itself. Ten years later, American life is a tale of two countries, separate and unequal, "we" and "they." And "we" don't remotely comprehend how the other country lives. How many of "us" have ever felt the desperation of the unemployed residents of the South Bronx who camped outside city offices one night last spring to apply for summer work at $50 a week? A salary of $50 a week is something

that happens in a foreign sweatshop.

"We" are even tired of being told about all this. Mayor White senses "a loss of sympathy for the cities. There's a growing hostility, and the looting in New York exacerbated it." Many Americans simply have given up on the idea of ever reversing urban poverty. "People," White observes, "believe the lie that the Great Society tried everything under the sun." The political chic of 1977 is skepticism about government programs, as though some mysterious, fatal, epistemological flaw dooms all social programs to failure. Thus, Democratic senators are proclaiming themselves post-New Deal anti-spenders. They have it exactly backward: The reason for the failures of the 1960s is fully comprehensible and very basic, explains a HUD consultant: "If building a house costs $20,000 and you try to build it for $5,000, you're going to get a house that falls down." In 1966, Lyndon Johnson rejected Poverty Director Sargent Shriver's plan for a guaranteed annual income: the $16 billion cost was too high, Johnson decided. (The '66 Vietnam tab: $18 billion.)

Kevin White believes that Commerce Secretary Kreps, HEW's Califano and HUD's Harris "are more sympathetic to the cities than any Cabinet appointees in years." But, he adds, "I don't think the President understands cities any more than I understand rural electrification. I think he regards the urban crisis as liberal rhetoric."

So the fire this time continues. We are nearing the point where millions of poor Americans will see no decent future, and no social obligations to (or from) them, within the system. The looters in New York seemed to feel they had a right to take what they could. "A lot of blacks feel that," says FOCUS: HOPE's Eleanor Josaitis. "They believe it's all they're ever going to get." A young black radical in New York isn't sure when the next explosion will come—"tomorrow or two years or ten years—but it's going to come." In the meantime, he anticipates "more urban guerrilla war, shootings and robberies that appear to be random—but aren't."

The inhabitants of the other, lesser America are burning their way out of the ghettos, even if there are no better places to go. Detroit's 12th Street, once the most densely populated avenue in the city, is now a row of vacant lots. A black graduate of Eastern Michigan University who can't find a job, any job, even manual labor, surveys the damage and says softly, "I've got to believe Carter is going to help. We've waited for so long. We've been in all of America's wars, all the bad times. We'd like to be part of the good times. We'd like to be Americans." ●

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Carter's New Welfare State/Gary Kellgren's Last Day

The Insider

Politics

Squeezing the dough, molding the rolls

President Carter, who lashed himself to the principle of welfare reform during the campaign, has just received the final draft proposal from HEW, Office of Management and Budget, and Domestic Council teams who worked on reforms. They are, reports say, wholly Carterized—theoretically liberal and effectively conservative. They provide for a balancing act, in which currently high-benefiting welfare states will be cut back and disciplined while traditionally conservative states receive help from a federal government that formerly was willing to let local things well enough alone.

Among the features to reach the President's desk will be a $3 billion tax cut for the working poor and an $8 billion subsidy for jobs for people now on welfare. Much of the $8 billion will come from money that is now involved with federal public works programs for the unemployed.

Over 1 million people will be added to welfare rolls in Texas. Other low-aid states will have similarly large additions, while currently aggressive social-aid states like New York will be helped far less; 100,000 people will be knocked off New York rolls. Nationwide benefit levels will be less generous than current levels in New York, California and other industrial states.

The wages in federally subsidized welfare jobs will be slightly above the minimum wage level, and welfare benefits for those who don't work will be below poverty level. The total number of Americans receiving welfare will rise from 31 to 39 million; because it so limits benefits the new program won't initially cost much more than current budgeting allows, although expectations are that the costs will shoot up soon.

Recommendations reaching the President's desk will also mandate the cancellation of the food stamp program.

UPI

Kennedy with Liam Cosgrave: Marshall plan for the Irish

The sending of the green

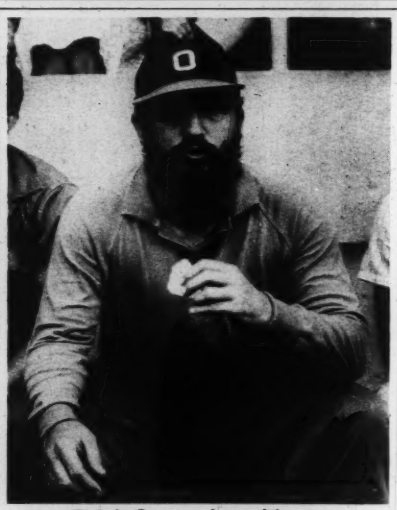
Ted Kennedy has agreed, along with House Speaker Tip O'Neill, New York governor Hugh Carey and Senator D. P. Moynihan to condemn Americans who supported the terrorist actions of the IRA—but he needed something better. He told Irish leaders to provide a positive plan he could support, not attack.

Dublin produced a plan which (if given the expected White House cooperation) would produce the first U.S. initiative to end the eight-year-old civil war in the Six Counties. Here's how it would be made public:

Sometime this summer or early fall, President Carter is supposed to announce that the United States wants to see a settlement of the struggle in Ulster between the Protestant majority and the Roman Catholic minority. When that settlement comes, or when some progress has been shown, the United States will come in to contribute financial aid to the neglected economy of the north.

Draft proposals outlining such aid center on creating jobs to alleviate the 14 percent overall unemployment which averages 35 percent in Catholic areas.

The program has been cleverly plotted out to be unassailable by either Catholic or Protestant Ulster politicians. "The officeholder who comes out against jobs is likely to find himself out of one," says an observer familiar with the plan. To avoid the smell of a bribe, no dollar figure will be attached to the revitalization program, and its mechanism will allow for a conversion from a wholly U.S. affair to one funded internationally, by the UN or Common Market. *—David Murray*



PHOTOGRAPH BY LEE LOCKWOOD/BLACK STAR

Fidel: Come play with us

Diplomacy: Strike three, Balfour

Americans in Paris troop to see art. Cubans in New York stand on line to see baseball. Last month the office of the Cuban ambassador to the United Nations asked for six tickets to watch the All-Star game at Yankee Stadium, but it was not idle fandom—the ambassador was doing a little scouting on his nation's behalf. It seems the Cubans wanted to watch the team they planned on inviting to play their All-Stars. With his usual grace, Baseball Commissioner Bowie Kuhn turned the dignitaries down.

Despite the insult, we've heard the Cubans will ask American All-Stars to visit and play in November.

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Le Car leaves La Competition behind.

About the only thing Le Car has in common with little cars like Rabbit, Honda Civic and Chevette is its size. Le Car comes with front-wheel drive, rack and pinion steering, all-independent suspension and Michelin steel-belted radials, all standard. The others don't.

All these features result in performance that is anything but standard. Le Car gives you incredible handling and cornering and tremendous maneuverability. Last year Le Car took first in its class in 12 out of 16 races, beating Hondas, Datsuns, Pintos, Vegas, Toyotas and Fiats. In a race this year Le Car finished ahead of such high performance cars as a Datsun 280-Z and an Alfa Romeo.

Great performance, *plus* 41 MPG highway, 28 MPG city, according to 1977 EPA figures.* *Remember:* These mileage figures are *estimates*. The actual mileage *you* get will vary depending on the type of driving you do, your driving habits, your car's condition and optional equipment. California excluded

The inside story of Le Car's success: comfort.

Forget the stiff harsh ride you usually get with small cars. Our engineers designed a wheelbase that is even longer than some big cars. The result is a ride that is amazingly smooth even on the roughest of roads.

Once inside you'll notice something else you don't usually get with small cars. A roomy interior with comfortable seats. The front seat lifts up and forward so passengers can get in and out of the back without any problems.

Outside we added a touch of fun. Le Car offers an optional gigantic sunroof. We call it a "fun roof." There's nothing like it in small cars.

Le Car is setting Renault sales records every month. Test drive one and you'll find out why it's Le Car Hot. Le Car prices start at only $3345.* Call 800-631-1616 for your nearest dealer. In N.J. call collect 201-461-6000.

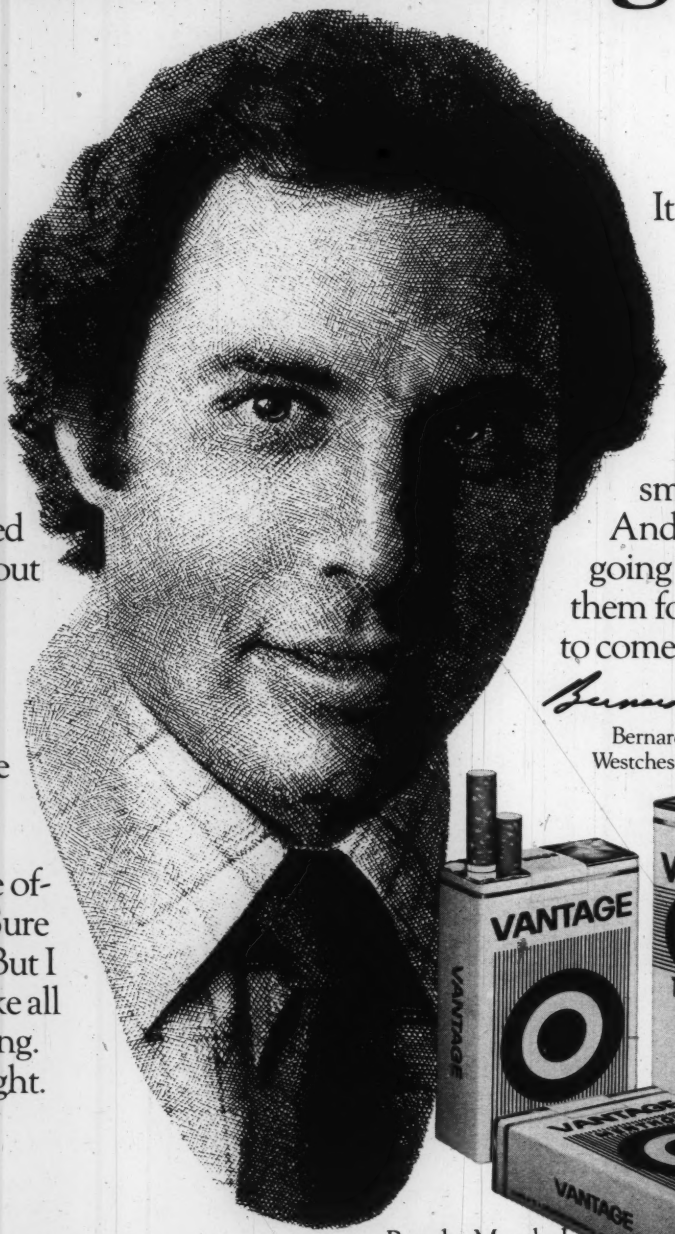
*P.O.E. East Coast. Price excludes transportation, dealer preparation and taxes. Stripe, Mag wheels, Luggage rack, Sun roof and Rear wiper/washer optional at extra cost. Prices higher in the West.

Renault USA, Inc. © 1977

Le Car by Renault

© 1977—R.J. REYNOLDS TOBACCO CO.

"Vantage is solving a lot of my problems about smoking."



"You see, I really enjoy smoking. To me, it's a pleasure. But it was no pleasure hearing all the things being said against high-tar cigarettes.

"Of course, I used to kid myself a lot about giving up the taste of my old high-tar cigarette for one of those new low-tar brands. But every one I tried left my taste unsatisfied.

"Then someone offered me a Vantage. Sure I'd read about them. But I thought they were like all the others. I was wrong.

"Vantage was right. It satisfied like my old brand. Yet it had nearly half the tar.

"It's been about a year since I started smoking Vantage. And it looks like I'm going to be smoking them for a long time to come."

Bernard Schoenfeld

Bernard Schoenfeld
Westchester, New York

Regular, Menthol, and Vantage 100's.

Warning: The Surgeon General Has Determined That Cigarette Smoking Is Dangerous to Your Health.

FILTER: 10 mg. "tar", 0.7 mg. nicotine, MENTHOL: 11 mg. "tar", 0.7 mg. nicotine, av. per cigarette, FTC Report DEC. '76; FILTER 100's: 11 mg. "tar", 0.9 mg. nicotine av. per cigarette by FTC method.

Imperial Congress, Part IV

The battle over Capitol Hill "perks" continues. The good news is that the Senate recently passed an amendment shutting off the supply of free shaving mugs, hairbrushes, combs and storage trunks to members of Congress. The bad news is that Gary Hart's proposal to end free Capitol Hill parking for legislators, their staff and the press was defeated, 66–28.

The biggest argument to date, however, has been over nothing more substantive than calendars. Rep. Peter Kostmayer (D-Pa.), in perhaps one of the most daring pieces of legislation of 1977, suggested ending the printing and distribution of expensive congressional calendars, of which congressmen send tens of thousands to deserving constituents. "There are too many calendars in America," said the freshman representative. "This is a step towards getting rid of such clutter." Apparently nothing so arouses a congressman as a threat to cut off his supply of calendars. Rep. Joseph Gaydos (D-Pa.) immediately asked if Kostmayer would give *him* his extra calendars, but it was Rep. John McFall (D-Cal.) who delivered the definitive defense of the calendars.

McFall reported to his colleagues, with a straight face, that he had once received a letter from a schoolteacher, "in which she said . . . that the children in her class learned more about the government and history of the United States from that calendar than from all other materials she had used during the year."

Apparently the woman's teaching methods left something to be desired. Besides the dates, the only other feature of the calendar is an uncaptioned picture of the Capitol.

—*Murray Waas*

PHOTOGRAPH BY DENNIS BRACK/BLACK STAR

McFall: Calendar boy

Kirkpatrick: He knew we drugged

New faces of 1953

Several congressional leaders are privately expressing "astonishment" and "outrage" about a *New York Times* account that President Carter seriously considered nominating Lyman Kirkpatrick for the post of Deputy Director of the Central Intelligence Agency. It was Kirkpatrick who, as the CIA's Inspector General from 1953 to 1961, suppressed the story behind the death of Army biochemist Frank Olson, the human guinea pig who plunged from a New York hotel window while on a CIA-induced acid trip. (Kirkpatrick has admitted that he might have recommended stronger disciplinary action against those CIA employees responsible.)

Kirkpatrick was also undisturbed by the massive illegal mail openings engaged in by the CIA during his tenure, and, in a piece on the *Times*' Op-Ed page more than four years ago, voiced his satisfaction with Congress' oversight of CIA activities. This was before the Agency's drug experiments, mail openings, burglaries and assassination plots were exposed by the Church and Pike committees. Inspector General Kirkpatrick presumably was aware of such abuses as they were occurring; the possibility of his ignorance of these events is hardly more comforting.

Having a lousy time

In his evaluation of "A President Under Strain" in the July 29 *New York Times*, Hedrick Smith wrote that "some aides criticize him for personally deciding who uses the White House swimming pool and tennis court or which aides go on long-range trips rather than delegating such minor responsibilities. . . . "

Frustrated executive branch staffers have been pushing the story of White House's stopped-up plumbing onto almost anyone in Washington who'll listen. The gist of their complaints is that the President is paralyzed with the minutiae of his paper work, and nobody on his staff has been given the power to lighten his load. Carter made the manifest for his own London trip. He receives memos from Stuart Eisenstat on *every* budget expenditure. He chaired several meetings on the tuna/porpoise question to decide how many porpoises could be killed; the number chosen was a compromise between the highest and lowest figures.

White House aides say that the functions of their branch have simply become those of memo writing—boiling down issues to a size at which the President can handle them: everything flows from departments to the Office of Management and Budget to the Domestic Council to Eisenstat. When Carter finally gets them, they have a one-page memo on top for him to consider. The only real decisions delegated to Carter's staff concern which information is the most relevant for Chief. Apparently the President has little time to think of larger issues, and has no intention of excising himself from the morass.

Almadén Vineyards, Los Gatos and Paicines, California

Almadén Solera Sherries

An 18th century idea whose time has finally arrived.

Solera. The ideal system for making Sherry, popularized by the Spaniards back in the mid 1700's.

The process consisted of tier after tier of stacked oak casks. The top row of casks contained the youngest wines. These wines were carefully blended with the more mature wines in the next tier. Which were in turn blended with wines of greater maturity in the next tier.

Thus, through this meticulous marrying of the younger wines to the more mature wines the first Solera Sherries were created.

Today, nearly 200 years later, we at Almadén still employ this same time honored Solera system for aging and blending all our Sherries. And today, countless wine lovers all across the country are beginning to discover the unique aroma and distinctive taste that is characteristic of the true Solera Sherry.

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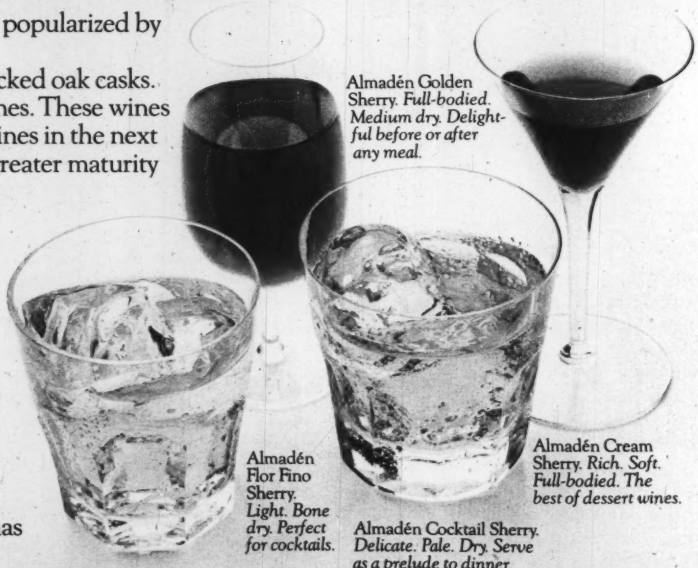
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Almadén Cream Sherry. Rich. Soft. Full-bodied. The best of dessert wines.

ALMADÉN SOLERA SHERRIES

UPI

Ashbrook: Beautiful sentiments

The Love Song of John Ashbrook

Several years ago, Congressman Earl Landgrebe, the right-wing former representative from Indiana, had a cruel trick played on him. Somebody, soon after the Final Days were over, entered a fabricated speech under his name in the August 14, 1974 *Congressional Record*: "He bombed Indochina back to the stone age, but he owned and loved a beautiful Irish setter, King Timahoe. He impounded funds intended for human needs, but he could play three different songs on a piano.

"I was a faithful supporter of our embattled President to the bitter, sour, end, stating even that I would be shot with him if necessary. Many wonderful people wrote to me recommending this course." Landgrebe called the phony "the work of a morbid and twisted mind."

So it was with good humor that we called Congressman John Ashbrook's office the other day to find out what morbid and twisted mind had tried to pass off the speech put under his name in the *Record* the day after New York City's blackout. "Oh yes," the speech read, "the bleeding hearts will say it is because these looters have been denied this or that. Yes, they have been denied something, but it is the strong force of the law.

"Looters should be shot . . . the infectious virus of plundering must stop. Historically, looters have always been considered as the lowest form of human life. They have always come out from under rocks when there is flood, fire, plague, disaster. Historically, they have been treated just as they deserved—shot on the spot."

An Ashbrook aide seemed surprised at our contention. "The looting statement isn't a hoax," he said. "As a matter of fact, he's quite proud of it. He wrote it himself, you know."

The Iranian reign thinks mainly of our planes (but they can't get them)

As gracefully as possible, the Iranians last week decided not to withdraw their request to buy the advanced airborne radar system whose sale Congress verged on forbidding. President Carter was determined to sell seven specially built 707 jets fitted with Westinghouse radar and electronics equipment. Known as Airborne Warning and Control Stations (AWACS), they were the most expensive planes ever produced at $125 million apiece.

The AWACS was not just another of the weapons with which the U.S. has totally armed Iran over the last 30 years. It is remarkable in two respects. It was, for one thing, said to be a major component of Ibex, the top-secret program of the defense of Iranian borders drawn up with CIA help. For another, the Boeing-manufactured plane is a favorite project of Senator Henry Jackson of Washington. Boeing Aircraft is Washington's largest employer; the sale would have provided a long-term market for spare parts and replacement planes. Jackson made it clear that he would undermine Jimmy Carter's energy program unless the sale was approved. "I am confident," Carter said July 28, "the sale will receive favorable Congressional review."

As part of Ibex, the AWACS was an element of a high-risk project that has been blamed for the murders of at least five Americans stationed in Iran. The proposed $1.2 billion sale would have conformed to the Shah's dreams of establishing a modern, powerful military force. The Shah has said he wants all other powers out of the Persian Gulf; he has asserted, however, that as long as the Soviet Union retains its military presence in Iran, he must depend on the United States for purchased strength.

Critics of AWACS said no Persian Gulf nation is currently capable of mounting a serious military threat to Iran and that if a surveillance plane *was* needed, a cheaper, more efficient one should be chosen.

Sources say Iran continues to yearn for AWACS. —*Jim Barron*

UPI

AWACS: Scoop and the Shah want it

Seventies

The Sex Pistols won't be playing Burlington

Under police escort, city officials of Burlington, Vermont, stormed a sell-out Supertramp concert—in time to catch a cut from *Crisis? What Crisis?*, the group's second album. Worming their way to the front of the stage, they saw the firecrackers and alcohol, smelled the dope and vomit and threatened to close the show down. Instead, two days later, they outlawed rock and roll. "It's a safety hazard," says Mayor Gordon Paquette. "We can't handle the problems that hard rock seems to bring out."

F. Lee Austin, city treasurer and newly appointed Arbiter of Rock and Roll, has formed a committee that will review albums of all proposed performers and decide what's acceptable. "Johnny Cash is no problem," said Austin. "Glenn Miller's orchestra is just fine . . . " "Poor kids," says Susan Green, music critic for the *Burlington Free Press*. "There's so little for them here . . . Besides, what's a little vomit among friends."

Opel makes news.

The results of the Buick Opel 5-Car Showdown are in!

Opel finishes...uh...2nd.

GM

A lot of car makers compare their car to other cars.

We compared our car *with* other cars.

In a daring, fender-to-fender competition called The Buick Opel 5-Car Showdown. In it, we pitted our Opel against four better known competitors in point-by-point, side-by-side, independently supervised tests of acceleration, cornering flatness, parking-lot maneuverability, pulling power, gradability, and a few other areas. In short, some of the things you'd like to know when you go out to shop for a car.

It was a bold move. After all, what if we didn't win?

Well, to make a long story short—we didn't. When all the tests were completed and all the figures tallied up, Opel finished second, right behind VW Rabbit. You can imagine how thrilled we were. But look at it this way: in order to finish second overall, we had to beat Toyota Corolla, Datsun B-210, and Subaru DL in a number of instances. (And in some areas, we beat VW, too, as you'll see.)

Which is a victory. And not just a moral one.

You see, we know Opel is a little dynamo of a car. But apparently no one else did. Because it seemed that whenever anyone went out looking for a practical little import, they looked real hard at the other cars in the Showdown. But hardly ever at ours.

So we wanted to show that Opel could hold its own against its famous competitors. That it should definitely be considered when you wander out to shop.

In other words, we were confident Opel was good enough to take on this competition.

Opel announces 4-doors.

Then we went one step further. And made Opel good enough to take on your family. By offering you our new, just-introduced-in-this-country Opel 4-door Sedan.

After all, if you've got a family (or maybe some friends you like taking along on spirited spins around the countryside), you need to carefully examine a car's ins and outs. So we gave you two more.

Easy come. Easy go.

Final Test Results (Showdown Point Summary)	VW Rabbit	Buick Opel	Toyota Corolla	Subaru DL	Datsun B-210
Interior Noise	5	5	5	5	5
EPA Interior Room Estimates	5	3	4	2	1
EPA Trunk Capacity Estimates	5	3	2	4	1
Pulling Power (30mph 3rd gear) (55mph 4th gear)	3	5	4	2	1
Parking Lot Maneuverability	3	5	4	2	1
EPA Mileage Estimates	3	2	4	4	5
Estimated Range	2	3	5	5	4
Maintenance Stops* (Recommended)	5	3	4	2	4
Acceleration (0-55mph, 20-35mph) (30-70mph)	5	4	3	2	1
Gradability*** (30mph 3rd gear) (55mph 4th gear)	5	4	3	3	2
Cornering Flatness**	4	5	3	4	5
Steering Quickness	5	5	5	4	5
Grand Total	50	47	46	39	35

*The less frequent the number of visits over 37,500 miles of normal driving, the higher the score. The number and type of inspections, adjustments and replacements would vary by visit.

**Based upon opinion that less lean is preferable to more lean.

***Includes vehicle weight.

In California, Opel placed second on an overall basis. Individual test results vary from those shown above.

See your Buick Opel dealer for complete details.

Opel makes sense.

You can learn a lot from a test drive.

Or even a test-sit.

That will let you experience our body-contoured vinyl seats. Seats tailored for comfort and good lateral support. With seatbacks that adjust.

It'll show you—in one quick glance—how easy it is to read Opel's well thought-out instrument panel, and reach Opel's well-placed controls.

And it will reveal (most abundantly) Opel's thick, standard pile carpeting (one more way this small car lives up to its Buick name). Perhaps even startle you with an amazing sight in small cars these days: a real glove compartment . . . that locks.

What you will most certainly notice first, though—if you happen to be sitting in the driver's seat of an Opel Deluxe Coupe—is that you're not just looking at a bunch of warning lights. But gauges. A tachometer right next to the speedometer. An oil-pressure gauge. An ammeter. An electric clock with a second hand. All standard. To let the enthusiast in you keep a close eye on the kind of response you're getting from that gutsy 1.8 litre dynamo under the hood.

But to really feel how Opel goes on the road, you should really feel it. On the road.

And, oh, what a feeling.

Opel performs.

Indeed it does. As the 5-Car Showdown will testify. First of all, in tests of cornering flatness and steering quickness, none of the competitors out-ran Opel. And in tests of acceleration and gradability, only the VW Rabbit (a car much-ballyhooed for its fuel-injected engine) was able to nose out our Opel for top honors.

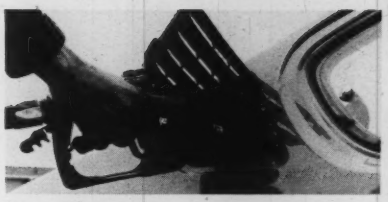
Opel's strong showing in these areas isn't surprising when you consider its own accoutrements. Like the dynamic overhead-cam, 4-cylinder hemi engine. Four-coil-spring-suspension. Front stabilizer bar. Rear track bar. Floor-mounted, full-synchronized, short-throw, 4-speed manual transmission (with 5-speed and automatic available). Rack-and-pinion steering. And lots more.

Nevertheless, it still may surprise you. But then, up to this point, maybe you haven't considered Opel.

Maybe you should.

More than just mileage: range.

When you do consider Opel, you'll find it quite considerate of you. With EPA mileage estimates of 36 mpg on the highway and 23 mpg in the city. (The actual mileage you get will vary depending on the type of driving you do, your driving habits, your car's condition and available equipment. Estimates lower in California.) But don't stop there.



You won't have to. Because with Opel's 13.7-gallon gas tank (largest of any of the cars in the Showdown, by the way), its estimated range is about 350 miles.

(By the way, this range estimate is a function of both gas tank capacity and miles per gallon, and is based on multiplying the EPA combined estimate, which is 27 mpg, by gas tank capacity. Actual range may vary.)

The best news of all.

If by now our intrepid little Opel is beginning to sound like an intriguing proposition, let us suggest you hurry to your Buick Opel dealer for further consultation.

Not only will he give you a brochure with complete details on the 5-Car Showdown, he'll be happy to provide you with one of those revealing test-drives we mentioned.

And, of course, he'll show you how very affordable Opel is to buy.

Come on, now. Any car with this much going for it is at least worth considering, isn't it?

BUICK OPEL

PHOTOGRAPH BY DELL VOUNIE

The Canforas: Good Americans

The Insider Interview: Albert and Anne Canfora

Albert and Anne Canfora are middle-class Americans and proud of it. They're equally proud of their four children. They're proud of Alan, 28, who's working on a master's degree in library science; of Chic, 26, who teaches high school and plays the harp at weddings; of Sonny, 24, a free-lance photographer; and of Mark, 19, who wants to play pro baseball. All Americans, all nice. So what has the Canfora family done to be handcuffed and hauled away by the Portage County, Ohio, sheriffs? They protested the building of the Kent State gym.

Since May 4, 1970, the Canfora family has endured arrests, trials, setups and frustrations in an effort to bring justice for the shooting of students by the Ohio National Guard. One of those shot and wounded was Alan Canfora. Soon after the shootings, both Alan and Chic were indicted among the "Kent 25" for inciting to riot. Although the indictments were dropped for lack of evidence, the Canforas couldn't escape trials nor grand jury actions and dismissals, federal court hearings, dismissals, reversals, trials and more appeals as the facts of Kent State's violence got turned over and over.

"Every time the Kent State incident comes up," says Anne Canfora, "we get phone calls and hate mail." They claim that a 1971 dope bust and felony charge against Alan was a setup. On July 12 this year, they were arrested, handcuffed and taken during the mass demonstration against the building of the Kent State gym. Two weeks later, they were stopped, handcuffed and searched by police while warrants were being issued for their children's arrests on charges of trespassing onto Kent State property. Television cameras picked up the entire incident. Canfora, a Barberton, Ohio, city councilman, now faces a recall because of his family's arrest. "I won't lose," he says, "no matter what happens. My family and I are not radicals. We are exercising our rights as American citizens."

Albert and Anne Canfora never imagined this, or any, notoriety when they settled in Barberton in 1948. They had met during the war when she was a WAC nurse and he was recuperating from the loss of an eye suffered while fighting "The Big War." Now Albert works for Goodyear Aerospace as an assembler in the wheel and brake department. He is active in the unions and has gone from shop steward to the vice-presidency of Assemblers Local 856. He and his wife have spent all their money bailing their children out of jail following their demonstration arrests. Their bail was set at $2,000 apiece. "I've got $1.99 left now," laughs Anne Canfora.

Anne Canfora admits she was "scared to death" about being arrested. "I had a crucifix in my hand the whole time," she says. "I kept praying for God to give us strength." The crucifix was embedded in her palm after the Sheriff placed the handcuffs on her.

In 1970, shortly after the May 4 shooting, Anne Canfora had a priest come over to bless their home. "We were sitting on the couch and the priest walks in," she says. "He got into a political discussion with Chic and the next thing I know he was calling us Communists and radicals." The priest left. "He didn't even bless my home," said Anne Canfora. The Canforas have not been back to church since.

—Rosemary Cowles

Mind & Body

Saved by the belch

Bruce Cunningham had been at the bottom of a Michigan pond for 38 minutes before being recovered by police. Cold and blue, showing no sign of pulse or respiration, the 18-year-old was pronounced dead on the scene.

But somewhere between the pond and the morgue, the body gave one last gasp—an involuntary belch usually associated with imminent death. Resuscitation was started and the boy was rushed to a hospital. He survived and suffered no brain damage.

University of Michigan doctors explain the miracle thus: the sensory stimulus of cold water triggered a heretofore unappreciated primitive "mammalian diving reflex" that allows air-breathing animals like seals to stay underwater for prolonged periods. Bodily functions slow to a near stop, breathing ceases and blood flow is redistributed to assure the brain an adequate supply of oxygen.

But don't mimic the dolphins. It's a chancy trick. The water must be *very* cold for the mammalian reflex to work.

—Larry Frederick

National mammographic

If you saw the recent headlines about a new skin test for breast cancer, a word of caution. The test has yet to be proven effective, and even if it is, it will be at least 1980 before it's available. Enthusiastic newspaper accounts left the impression that the test—developed by Northwestern microbiologist George Springer—had detected cancer in 70 consecutive patients at Evanston Hospital in suburban Chicago. But when questioned, Dr. Springer said it had spotted tumors in only 35 patients—all of whom were suspected of having cancer in the first place. Moreover, when the test was tried on 35 noncancerous patients, it gave the wrong result twice, indicating two women had malignant tumors.

None of which means the test is a hoax; it just needs further research. Indeed, the test is based on a sound theory: that women with incipient tumors have a certain substance in their blood released by the thymus gland to attack a cancerous invasion.

—Larry Frederick

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In this day of fast-food reporting, New Times is one magazine that will stick to your ribs.

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NewTimes

The magazine of the '80s

Post Scripts

Gary Kellgren's last hit

When I go I'm gonna have Electraglide nails, man . . . They're gonna blind you, man. I'm gonna have Electraglide nails when I die.

—Gary Kellgren

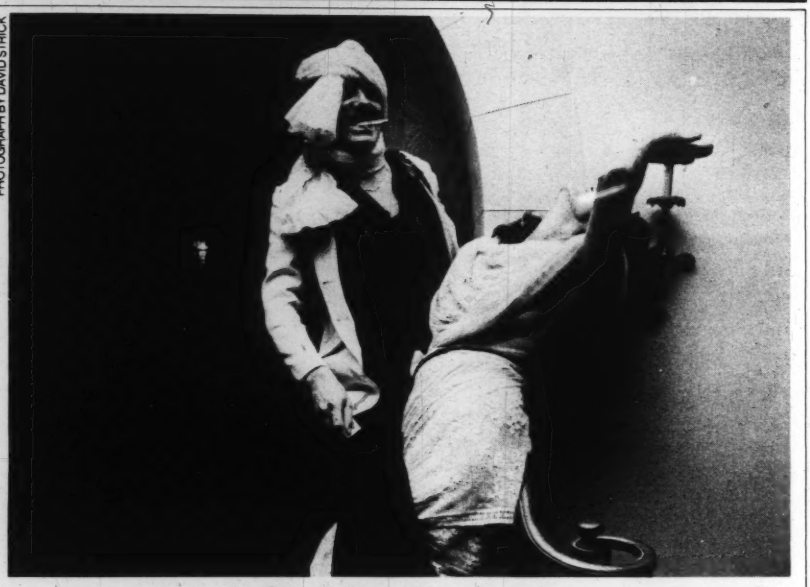
It was an imperfect exit. When the bodies of recording wizard Gary Kellgren and his friend Kristianne Gaines were fished out of Kellgren's Hollywood pool on the night of July 20th, their nails were bleached a dull white from the chlorine in the water. L.A. police initially termed the deaths "a double accidental drowning," but as *New Times* goes to press, homicide detectives are continuing the investigation.

The deaths occurred at the end of an important day for those involved with the management of the Record Plant, *the* recording studio on the west coast. For some time, disagreements between Gary and co-owner Chris Stone had been rife. (The major difficulty was reportedly Kellgren's self-destructive, drug-oriented lifestyle, which was documented by Lucian K. Truscott IV in the last issue of *New Times*. Truscott described Kellgren's sensibility as one which "demanded that one live life right out to the edge, take every chance, do every drug, experience every high, dig every low, keep oneself awake every possible moment until finally one crashes and reaches the state of new bliss, the perpetual hangover . . . ") Nonetheless, their problems were apparently being resolved.

"We were in negotiations all day, ironing out the details to sell the Record Plant," a shaken Stone said last week. "Gary and I were happy. We had each sold out our shares to a third party [Ken Roberts, manager of Sly Stone]. I sold my half for cash. Gary was getting an employment contract. We were going to sign the deal Thursday morning."

With Kellgren's death, the deal is off, at least for the time being. "I want to give Marta as much time as she needs to decide what she wants to do," Stone said. "I've got a responsibility to her and to the plant. That business was like Gary's child. It's true he acted crazy sometimes, but he never did *anything* that would hurt the Record Plant. I've got to protect this place as a viable business."

PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVID STRICK



Gary Kellgren: Near the end

The mood at the Kellgren house Wednesday night was one of quiet celebration. Gary, his girlfriend/secretary Kris Gaines, his wife Marta and her live-in boyfriend Neil Hausman had gone through the buy-out negotiations as a team; all four had attended every meeting. Andy Sterns, Gary's lawyer, dropped by with his wife at about 9 p.m. for an after-dinner victory drink. They left at 10:30 p.m.

Marta went off to bed and Neil went in to check on her, leaving Gary and Kris on a raft in the pool. "I was only gone for five minutes," Hausman told *New Times*. "When I left the pool they were on the raft. When I looked out of Marta's window I couldn't see them." (Marta's bedroom directly overlooks the pool.) Hausman fished the two bodies from the bottom of the unusually deep (14-feet) pool, and applied mouth-to-mouth resuscitation to no avail.

According to close friends, Kris Gaines "couldn't swim a stroke"; on a recent trip to Hawaii she had adamantly refused to even wade in the ocean.

Friends theorized that Gaines had fallen off the raft, panicked, and pulled Kellgren down with her when he attempted a rescue. L.A.'s spacey rock elite speculated about drug overdoses and various nefarious plots. L.A. police will not explain why the case has been turned over to homicide, other than to say, "We naturally want to find out everything we can." However, sources close to the case expect the impending coroner's report to show both Kellgren and Gaines were drug-free at the time of their deaths.

By all reports, the 38-year-old Gary had indeed cleaned up his act, following his late-June operation for the removal of a kidney stone, but he was weakened and so could have drowned. Two weeks prior to his death, he had taken his two children to Iowa to visit his parents and childhood friends. He was even engineering again, and was working on an album with Monti Rock III. (Mr. Rock says the album will now be dedicated to Kellgren.)

Chris Stone said he had never seen Gary looking better than on the afternoon of his demise. "We were in separate rooms with our lawyers," he explained. "I ran into Gary in the hall and I couldn't believe it! The cat looked about 25 years old, wearing a new suit, a hair-cut, clean-shaven . . . he looked fucking great. He was ready to work, ready to move forward."

Marta Kellgren took out a double-page ad in *Billboard* and *Cashbox* last week, offering her thanks to his friends and a poem:

All my friends are me
'Cause what I see a friend to be
Is all their good and no
enemy. . .
I ain't never seen a man so small
or great
That I could find a reason to hate

—Gary W. Kellgren

—John Mankiewicz and David Harrison

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Haves and have-nots: While Jewish settlers of Tel el Beida swim in their two pools, Palestinian women must fetch water from a distant well. Here on the West Bank the Arab-Israeli conflict is a daily problem

Since 1967, Israel has consolidated her grip on the Arab lands she conquered during the Six-Day War. But ten years of military rule over a subject people have hardly enhanced her reputation as an outpost of human rights in the Mideast. Where Palestinian fields once blossomed, the Israelis have created a desert. Now, with a new hard-line government in Tel Aviv, Israel's approach to the Palestinian problem is apt to disturb even her most steadfast supporters

By T. D. Allman

OPPRESSOR ISRAEL?

When Israel's tough new Prime Minister, Menahem Begin, paid an official visit to Washington a few weeks ago, he and Jimmy Carter formed an instant mutual admiration society. "Never in my 30 years in public life," said Begin, "have I been as impressed by a political leader." Declared Carter in turn: "I don't think the meeting with him could have been any better."

Administration officials were especially pleased by the Israeli leader's apparent flexibility: all Mideast issues, he indicated, were negotiable, including, presumably, the status of the Arab territories that Israel conquered and seized 10 years ago this summer during the Six-Day War. At the conclusion of their talks, both Begin and Carter spoke optimistically of establishing, in Begin's words, "real peace" in the Middle East after "the delay of almost a generation."

To those who know Begin as an unbending hard-liner who considers the occupied Arab lands "liberated Israel"—and who hopes to annex them permanently—it all seemed too good to be true.

It was.

Less than a week after he left Washington, Prime Minister Begin reversed the policy of the preceding Rabin administration and gave legal status to three previously unauthorized Israeli settlements on occupied lands of the West Bank of the Jordan River. By officially establishing the three communities (Kaddum, Ofra, Maale Adumim) as a permanent part of Israel, the Begin government undercut both the prospects for a successful Geneva Conference this October and Jimmy Carter's hopes for eventually establishing a Palestinian homeland in the occupied territories. During their talks, in fact, Carter had specifically requested Begin to defer any further settlements at least until after Geneva.

After Begin's surprise move, Secretary of State Vance publicly criticized Israel for acting "contrary to international law" and creating "an obstacle toward peace"; privately, the unexpected decision was said to have infuriated Carter. The Washington Post *called it "reckless, provocative and indefensible . . . a frontal assault on the American effort to arrange a settlement." But, really, Begin's actions should have come as no surprise. For a decade now, Israel has ruled the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and the Golan Heights with an iron fist, all the while digging in—and shoving out the areas' Arab inhabitants.*

It is not a pretty picture, and in the U.S. press, traditionally sympathetic to the Israeli cause, it has remained one of the untold stories of the long, tortuous Middle East conflict. But the latest Israeli move to permanently solidify her hold on the occupied territories now confronts Israel's long-time American supporters with questions that most would prefer not to ask:

Is Israel really a threatened outpost of human rights? Or is it a country that has used a generation of U.S. arms and money, and above all a generation of U.S. good will and emotional support, to quadruple its size and dispossess millions of people?

The statesmen on all sides speak of regional security, demilitarized zones and international law, but in the two small West Bank villages of Bardala and Tel el Beida, where a thousand or so farmers try to scratch a living from the rocky soil, there exists a perspective that is found nowhere on the detailed 1:500 negotiating maps.

In Tel el Beida and Bardala, the long Arab-Israeli conflict is a daily problem afflicting human lives. The situation there is one that few Israelis will even admit exists. It is also a human dilemma that the Arabs, preoccupied with ideolo-

PHOTOGRAPHS BY WILLIAM KAREL/SYGMA

PHOTOGRAPH BY DENNIS BRACK/BLACK STAR

Too good to be true: Carter and Begin meeting in July

gy and rhetoric, have largely ignored.

Only a few years ago, the most significant thing about both villages, with their mud brick houses, some of them sprouting television aerials, was not that they lay atop the fault line of one of modern history's most perplexing problems. It was that in spite of four Arab-Israeli wars, the villagers had made some progress. At Tel el Beida, a modern irrigation system had doubled crop yields. At Bardala, the villagers had constructed a municipal water system that piped drinking water to each household.

Today, the two villages are much changed. The irrigation system is now a ruin of dusty culverts. The pipes are also dry, and the village women, as in the day of Turkish rule, must fetch water from a distant well; the round-trip, down and up a rocky hillside, is nearly a mile.

Not that either village has suffered a drought. Rather, the inhabitants are afflicted by something which for them has assumed all the characteristics of a *permanent* natural calamity. The source of their misfortune is the nearby Medah cooperative farm, a new Jewish settlement. One of nearly one hundred such settlements Israel has established in the occupied territories, Medah is a cluster of modern buildings surrounded by high fences where 30 Jewish families now live.

A year after Israeli forces originally swept through the area, just west of the Jordan river and south of the Israeli town of Beit She'an, Israeli engineers surveyed the two Palestinian villages. Then, in violation of Jordanian water law—which even official Israeli publications say that Israel is obliged to respect—the Israelis drilled a new and deeper well only a few yards from the Palestinian well.

Since then, the Palestinian water supply has steadily diminished. But the Israelis not only have forbidden the villagers to drill an artesian well, they also refuse to sell them water. The thousand Palestinians of Bardala and Tel el Beida formerly consumed 270 cubic meters of water an hour. But the 30 Jewish families at Medah now consume *1,500* cubic meters of water an hour, and the two Palestinian villages are slowly dying of thirst.

The Israeli cooperative has become an island of Jewish affluence, which has created around itself a sea of Palestinian desolation. When, as planned, Medah doubles in size, the nearby Arab villages may be left with no water at all.

Such takeovers were far from rare in the occupied territories even before the Begin government's decision to legalize Kadum, Ofra and Maale Adumim, but if Israel's new leaders have their way, they may multiply many times over. Under the Israeli occupation, the Arab population of the Syrian Golan Heights has been reduced from 77,000 to 13,000. Some 200,000 Palestinians—about a quarter of the remaining population on the West Bank—have been forced to emigrate. Even in the tiny Gaza Strip, where more than 450,000 Palestinians, mostly refugees, are packed into a largely desert area of only 120 square miles, the Israelis have confiscated nearly 100,000 acres of the best land, and there established four barricaded Jewish settlements.

In the highlands above the Jordan valley, all signs of Palestinian life are being systematically eradicated. Palestinian cisterns have been sealed. Palestinian farmers have been forcibly removed, and their lands turned over to Jewish settlers. When there are no Israelis available to cultivate the land, the fields are chemically defoliated. Palestinian shepherds working their traditional grazing lands are tracked down by Israelis in Jeeps, and chased away by rifle fire. And most significant of all, the Israelis have confiscated some 80 percent of all arable land abutting the west bank of the Jordan river—the area which would be the bread basket of any new Palestinian mini-state. High Israeli fences bar the original owners from their lands, and one passes dozens of dismantled Arab irrigation stations.

Beyond the rusting machinery, one sees the other side of Israel's proudest national claim. For here, where Palestinians' fields once blossomed, the Israelis have created a desert. Israel's defeated Labor government, fearful of international censure, kept most of the confiscated lands vacant. Now Menahem Begin wants to open them to intensive Jewish settlement, and many observers fear the Israelis will not stop there.

"I have seen the Israelis watch a Palestinian farmer double his output," an American agricultural development expert told me before last May's elections, "and then seize half his land." In the Jordan valley village of El Makruk, an Arab farmer pointed to the Israeli barbed wire. "They have taken three-quarters of what my father left me," he said. "There is no land for my sons to till. One of them is now a day laborer for the Israelis. The other two have had to leave the country to find work."

The residents of the occupied territories always have suspected that the real, if unadmitted, Israeli policy was to dispossess them of their homeland. With Begin's election, this now has become explicit Israeli policy, and the Palestinians know that even if they try to resist, the Israelis will be the chief beneficiaries. "We could dismantle the Israeli well some night," a farmer at Bardala told me, as he walked in his parched fields, "but then the Israelis would take all our land, and the American newspapers would report that the terrorists had struck again."

Palestinians are not the only ones embittered by Israeli policy and the arrogance with which it is often administered. "Last winter," a U.S. official stationed in the Gaza Strip reports, "the Israelis erected an immense set of Chanukah candles on the highest rise above the refugee camps. It was like rubbing people's noses in the dirt." He adds:

T.D. Allman, contributing editor to Pacific News Service and Director of Urban Research at the University of California at Berkeley, has recently returned from a two-month journey through Israel and the Arab nations.

"Periodically, just to show that not even Americans can protect anyone, they pick up one of my Arab employees and torture him. The last one was a sixteen-year-old office boy. They tried stuffing his own boot down his throat."

"Economically and socially," a United Nations official says, "Gaza is becoming a Soweto." Israelis can settle and work in Gaza, but Palestinians who work across the border in Israel are forbidden to reside in their old villages, even when they work in Israeli fields that once belonged to them.

In Gaza, local Palestinian capital has built one of the largest orange packing plants in the Mideast, and in spite of its aridity and dense population, the strip produces a quarter as many oranges for export as does the whole of Israel. But while Israeli products have free entry everywhere in the occupied territories, Palestinian-grown oranges are not permitted to compete in Israel, nor may they be exported to countries where Israeli oranges are sold.

Gaza, like the rest of the occupied territories, is also becoming a Soweto politically. The youth have been radicalized by ten years of hard Israeli rule. Even Israeli officials agree that if free elections with political parties were permitted, Yasser Arafat and the PLO would win an overwhelming majority. Yet the Israeli government continues to denounce the Palestine Liberation Organization as totally unrepresentative.

Throughout the occupied territories, one confronts a pervasive reality: After ten years, the Israelis have no empathy for the peoples Begin's Likud government now wishes to rule forever. Rather, the chief concern of the Jewish settlers is to avoid at all cost the emergence of an integrated society in which both peoples might live together as equals.

"The Palestinians complain all the time," says Hillel Wiseberg, a member of the Medah cooperative, when asked about the water shortages in the two villages a five-minute walk from his house. "They forget all their progress is due to us." Should Israel, in return for peace, relinquish settlements like Medah, which have been built on Arab territory? "This is Jewish land," replies Wiseberg, who emigrated from Britain 11 years ago. "Why should we turn it over to aggressors?" He adds that in eight years at Medah, he has never entered either nearby Palestinian village, never taken a meal with any of his non-Jewish neighbors, never had a serious discussion with any of them. "You surprise me with all this talk of a water shortage," he says. "We have no shortage here." Should the Israelis share the water with their neighbors? "If they were industrious like us," Wiseberg says, "they wouldn't have these problems."

"The Arabs have no right either to Gaza or the Sinai peninsula," an Israeli escort officer informed me during an official briefing at Gaza. Maps published in Israel show no international borders for Israel. "Wherever Jews settle," says an Israeli businessman, "that is Israeli. That is all there is to it."

In Jerusalem, Israeli spokesmen used to say that such statements were totally unrepresentative of Israeli opinion. They quoted official statements saying that "Israel considers this a temporary occupation." They emphasized that Israel, as a democracy, is deeply concerned with all human rights, and has no desire to deprive other peoples of their lands.

But that was all before the May election. And even before the victory of the conservative Likud party, Jews attempting merely to open a dialogue with Arabs discovered that it was a perilous enterprise. When a group of Jewish American women, all Zionist activists, visited several Arab countries late last year, they were attacked by Israeli officials for meeting with Jihan Sadat, Egypt's first lady, and for visiting a Jewish school in Damascus. When Charlotte Jacobson, the group's leader, said "The Arabs are tired of war," then Foreign Minister Yigal Allon accused her of abetting "the Arab propaganda war." Some Likud supporters, indeed, now believe the real Zionist struggle is not with the Arabs, who present no immediate military threat, but with "unreliable" Jews—Soviet Jews who emigrate, but do not come to Israel; Americans who support Carter's evenhanded approach to the Mideast rather than follow Israeli policy; Israeli citizens who attempt a dialogue with the Palestinians.

When Israeli members of the Council for Israel-Palestine Peace met with PLO officials in Paris last year, Allon denounced the action, saying there was "no hope and no chance" of mutual understanding, and that the only place Israelis should meet Palestinians was on the battlefield. The Council's leader, General Mattityahu Peled, a hero of the Six Day War, disagrees. He says Israel should depend for its security not on keeping Arab lands, but by relying on the Israel Defense Forces, which he points out have never failed the homeland in battle. (Supporters of Menahem Begin in Parliament have denounced General Peled as an anti-Zionist traitor.)

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In most ways, the defeated Labor government was as adamantly opposed to an equal relationship with the Palestinians as the Likud block. But it at least had a policy for dealing with the occupied territories and their embittered population that bore some relationship to reality.

The so-called Allon Plan was a clever strategy for retaining Israel's military gains, while getting rid of the political liabilities of policing a hostile population; it would have done so by keeping Israel's military outposts on Arab land while transferring the local population to King Hussein (whose forces killed thousands of Palestinians in Black September 1970). The Plan also sought to excise the threat to Israel's Jewish identity involved in incorporating a large Moslem and Christian Palestinian community. As Allon himself put it, "Both to preserve its Jewish character and to contribute to a solution of the Palestinian issue, Israel should not annex an additional Arab population."

The Allon Plan was presented to the world as an act of Israeli generosity. But the prospect of returning any lands at all to the Arabs alarmed many Israelis, including Menahem Begin. In a crucial television debate just before the election, Begin accused his hawkish opponent, Shimon Peres, of willfully endangering the very survival of Judaism by supporting the plan, and this seems to have decided the election. For, contrary to the initial analyses, which indicated that domestic difficulties caused the Labor defeat, a study by Professor Uri Ra'anan of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy reveals that Israeli popular opposition to withdrawal from Arab lands cost Labor more votes than anything else.

So now, at a time when those Jews leaving Israel have begun to outnumber those immigrating *to* Israel, Begin talks of waves of Israeli youth Judaizing a land that already is densely populated by Mideast standards. And should the waves of settlers actually materialize in the West Bank and Gaza, what is to happen to the Palestinians who are already there? And what of the 2 million Palestinians abroad, who dream of returning home?

The fact is that any annexation of the occupied territories is bound to threaten Israeli democracy *and* Israel's Jewish character far more effectively than Arab armies ever have been able to do. That is why Arab extremists—who, unlike Hussein, Assad, Sadat and Arafat, really do want to drive the Israelis into the sea—were almost as jubilant about the May election results as the Likud winners.

For if Begin has his way and Israel actually does annex the occupied territories, it will be obliged under its own constitution to give the Palestinians of Gaza and the West Bank the same rights nearly half a million Palestinians already have as Israeli citizens. Overnight, Israel would become a nation about 35 percent Arab.

Even now, Israel is becoming relatively less Jewish within its own original borders. Since 1948, the Palestinian population of the country has tripled, and now it is growing at a rate of 5.9 percent annually, versus a Jewish growth rate of only 1.5 percent a year. In Jerusalem, which Mayor Teddy Kollack has vowed to transform into a "Jewish city," Jews last year declined as a proportion of the city's total population, in spite of a continuing program to uproot Palestinians from the old city. And Galilee, an area shielded from both Arab armies and PLO *fedayeen* by the intensive Israeli fortifications on the Golan Heights, demographically has all but slipped out of Jewish hands without a single battle being fought. In western Galilee and the fertile Jezreel Valley, the Jewish population in one recent year increased by only 759 persons, the Palestinian population by 9,035.

Palestinians may soon comprise the majority in the entire crucial area of northern Israel lying between the West Bank and Lebanon, and between the Golan Heights and the sea. By the end of the century, it is conceivable that all of Israel might have an Arab majority. Long before that, however, Palestinians could hold the balance of power, thanks to an electoral system that consistently produces weak coalition governments.

Building on their demographic gains, Palestinian citizens of Israel already have won growing power by peaceful, constitutional, democratic means. They have built a record of honest local government that even some Jews envy at a time when one Israeli cabinet minister has committed suicide following corruption charges, and a prime minister has resigned for the same reason. Nazareth especially, with Tewfiq Zayyad, its communist Palestinian mayor, has earned the reputation of being the Bologna of Israel.

The Israeli reaction to the Palestinians' exercise of their democratic rights under the Israeli constitution has been deeply disturbing to those who hope Israel will remain an outpost of human rights in the Mideast. Last year, peacefully demonstrating Galilee Arabs, all of them Israeli citizens, were shot dead by Israeli troops when the government confiscated their land, for no other discernible reason than that they were non-Jewish.

And only a few months after supporters of Israel angrily denounced a UN resolution accusing Israel of racism, Israel Koenig, the governor of the country's northern region, officially described the non-Jewish Israeli citizens under his jurisdiction as people inferior to Jews, and possessed of a "Levantine, superficial Arab character" in which "imagination plays a more important role than reason."

Especially alarming to Koenig was that non-Jewish Israeli citizens were using the same "methods that were followed by the Jewish settlers before the creation of the state." "Organized operations for the purchase by Arabs of real estate in the northern areas," Koenig warned, were threatening Jewish control. The governor also lamented the Palestinians' proclivity for higher education.

Koenig has several recommendations for preventing non-Jews from exercising the same political rights as Jews in Israel. Higher education, he argues, should be discouraged among non-Jews. Government agents should infiltrate legal political parties supported by non-Jews and destabilize them. Non-Jewish leaders who threaten Jewish interests, even by peaceful, legal means, should be removed from office and replaced by those willing to serve Jewish interests. Taxes on non-Jews should be raised to prevent them from purchasing land. Businesses and factories should be required to give employment preference to Jews over non-Jews. Non-Jewish Israeli citizens should be encouraged to leave the country and then "obstacles placed in the way of their return and obtaining work in Israel." Social benefits should be made available "exclusively to Jewish families."

Like the practice of random arrest and torture in Gaza, like depriving West Bank villages of water, Koenig's proposals are indicative of how ten years of military rule over a subject people has led Israel toward deliberate, ethnic discrimination, even within its own pre-'67 borders. As Koenig himself concedes, "One of the most disturbing phenomena is the lack of tolerance shown by the middle-class Jew toward the Arab citizen; in certain cases this can amount to real hatred."

Ten years ago, General Dayan declared: "Soldiers of the Israel Defense Forces, we do not aim at conquest." But

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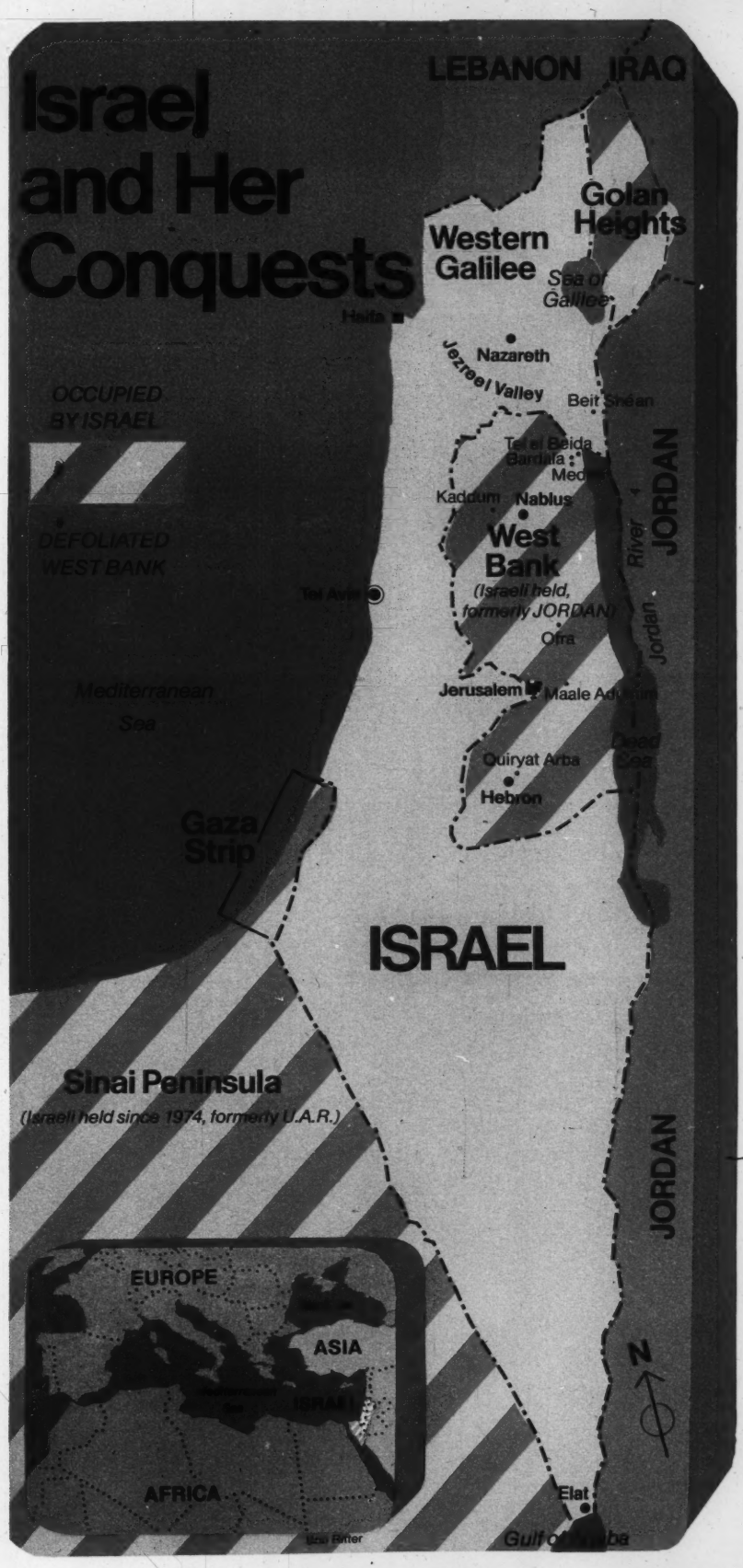

today, Israel is caught up in its conquests—and the consequences of conquest: the economic costs of prolonged military occupation; the social costs for a people who never can let their guard down; the international costs of increasing ostracism. Above all, if it keeps the occupied territories, Israel will go on paying the moral costs of unequal and coercive relations with a conquered people, a relationship that is degrading, corrupting and embittering to victor and vanquished alike. The growing truth is that while Arab armies never have penetrated Israel's frontiers, and the PLO never has developed an effective resistance inside Israel, Israeli democracy and the egalitarian ideals of Zionism already are seriously threatened by the search for a military solution to problems that are chiefly social and political.

One sees the price Israel has paid for its victories in the Arab menials sweeping the streets; in the de facto segregation of the school systems; in a national syndrome of fear, arrogance and exclusivity. Less than 5 percent of all Israelis now live on kibbutzim yet even they are increasingly dependent on landless Palestinian labor. "My students have contempt for manual jobs," a Jewish teacher says. "They say it's 'Arab work.'"

"What is the Israeli policy?" a Palestinian farmer in Bardala asks, as he showed me his dying fields. He was a Christian, and to summon up the fate that now haunts not only the Arabs, but Israel as well, he quoted the twenty-third chapter of Exodus: "I will not drive them out from before thee in one year; lest the land become desolate and the beasts of the fields multiply against thee. By little and little I will drive them out before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land."

As Prime Minister Begin now has served notice on the world at Kaddum, Ofra and Maale Adumim, this remains his policy too—whatever overtures toward "real peace" he makes when he comes to Washington seeking support, money and guns. After 30 years, America does have a commitment to Israel, and with Menahem Begin as Prime Minister, Israel needs that commitment now more than ever. But as Jimmy Carter should fully understand by now, kind words in Washington are no substitute for steps toward genuine peace in the Mideast. From now on, we may have to honor our commitment to Israel not by praising the Lord and passing the ammunition, but, as George Ball once put it, by finding ways to save Israel in spite of herself.●

PHOTOGRAPH BY ARA GALLANT AT TAVERN ON THE GREEN, N Y C.

THE NO SWEAT SWEAT LOOK

Now that physical fitness has once more become fashionable, the Sweat Look, long popular among short-order cooks and prisoners on chain gangs, is the latest clothing craze. Suddenly this summer, tank tops (formerly known as "grampa's undershirts") and running shorts ("stinky shorts") are coming out of the lockers and hampers and parading about in supermarkets, movie queues and, yes, even high-class restaurants.

The beauty of it is that athletic skills are not required—those who can, run; those who can't can still sport the Look. All one needs is a body in reasonably good shape (tank tops are not recommended for the massive) and a libido in some direction. Why a libido? Because the Sweat Look communicates on a gland scale. If you want to know what the disciple at the next table is saying with the Look, here's a translation:

1) I'm not a vegetable, I'm an animal.
2) Look at my legs.
3) I have enough money to maintain a comfortable, leisure-oriented existence.
4) Look at my arms.
5) I'm loose, baby; my lifestyle is together enough to put in lots of self-improvement time.
6) Look at my pecs.
7) I'm a genetic cross between Bruce Jenner and Diane Keaton.
8) Look at my tush.
9) I have extremely long endurance.

—Paul Slansky

Thanks in part to Tim Leary, acid therapy—"the ecstatic treatment"—is illegal. But if you are willing to journey 3,000 miles to a thatched hut in a Stone Age Mexican village, it remains available to a chosen few. Interested? Perhaps you should first consider the pilgrimage of Moshe, Max and Jim into the psychedelic mine field of Dr. Salvador Roquet, the pusher-priest

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CRAIG WATERS

THE CRUEL AID ACID QUEST

By Craig Waters

It is the most demanding, and most bizarre, of therapies.

It is more painful than the muscle-rending deep massages of Rolfing. More exhausting than the rigorous exercises of bioenergetics. More disorienting than the verbal gymnastics of est. More exotic than the incantations of a tribal medicine man. And more expensive, on an hour-to-hour basis, than psychoanalysis.

It is a form of psychotherapy that centers on the use of various psychedelic agents, including LSD-25, psilocybin, mescaline, datura and ketamine. It is illegal.

For a select but growing number of Americans, primarily therapists, it is also so appealing that they will willingly travel nearly 3,000 miles in order to make use of it. They will sleep on dirt floors, wander through tropical jungles, hike over the High Sierras, and endure dysentery and coral snakes in order to partake of the ecstatic treatment.

Their hunger—for a reality richer than the one they know, for a self freer than the one they experience—is great.

April 1. The significance of the date is not lost on me, but I do not feel like an April fool. I arrived in Mexico City this afternoon. After much phoning about, I located Moshe. He asked me to take a taxi to the home of Dr. Salvador Roquet; he said he would meet me there.

Dr. Roquet's white stucco home is in a pleasant residential section of the city; Moshe has not yet arrived. I am greeted by the doctor, a handsome man, dark, with striking white hair and a flashy keyboard of teeth.

Dr. Salvador Roquet Perez, 56, a former public health officer, is now a psychiatrist with a private practice. He has experimented with psychedelics for nearly 10 years, and conducted some 2,000 illegal psychedelic sessions. In 1974, he was arrested by Mexican police and imprisoned for five months; Salvador became more discreet. During the past year, he has conducted several psychedelic sessions in New England.

He has been married four times, and has had three children by each wife. He is either restless, a poor husband or following a strange master plan. Six of his children—ranging in age from Andreas, 4, to Patty, 21—will be traveling with us; for them, the trip will serve as a vacation with their father.

The doctor excuses himself to see a patient; his wife, a quiet, dignified woman, shows me to the living room. I wait there for Moshe. The house is dappled with cool shadows; there are carved crucifixes on the tables and walls. On one table: a collection of glass mushrooms. I wonder if they are *Psilocybe mexicana.*

After a quiet two-hour wait, Moshe and two of Roquet's assistants arrive.

Dr. Moshe Blatt, 35, has a Ph.D. in human development and clinical psychology from the University of Chicago. Like Tim Leary, he taught at Harvard, and, like Leary, moved on to hipper things. His life—an ongoing search for a purer and more powerful self—has become interchangeable with his work. Meditation, Sufism, Hassidism, LSD—each has been a step on his path. Now he has a private practice in Cambridge.

Moshe was born in Poland in 1941, but his family fled to Russia before the war began. He is the gentlest and most joyous man I know. He is a Jewish leprechaun—a short, slight creature with a comical mustache and beard. He wears

A Mexican trip: Moshe Blatt, Max Lan, and Jim Drazen (opposite top), disciples of Salvador Roquet (second from right), are stymied by a jungle river (right) en route to Santa Maria

an embroidered, red and green yarmulke as though it were his press pass to life.

Moshe and I talk for awhile. Then he and the others go out to buy something for dinner; I stay and flip through the pages of an album. The photographs are of an Indian village, Santa Maria Asuncion de Matamoras; it looks like a reprise of the Stone Age—tumbledown buildings of adobe and wood, clinging like fleas to bald spots on the side of a jungle-skinned mountain. It reminds me of *National Geographic* photos of native women nursing pigs.

We leave for Santa Maria tomorrow.

Moshe transforms a spartan, late-night dinner into a rich pre-Sabbath celebration. When the chicken and wine and tortillas are gone, he has everyone link arms with his neighbors; then, bobbing from side to side, he begins to sing. Soon everyone, whether friend or stranger, is singing and swaying together: a loving, lively family. This is Moshe's magic. He is very good at it.

Moshe, Jim and I were scheduled to sleep at a friend's apartment, but the schedule is changed unexpectedly; we sleep on the floor of Roquet's living room. As we squirm in our sleeping bags, we can hear him banging about the house, packing for tomorrow's trip.

April 2. We begin. Our departure is like a retreat: a frantic piling of 13 people, assorted backpacks and boxes into a Renault, a Jeep and a Dodge Super Bee. The only organized activity is the collection of fees: Patricia, one of Roquet's daughters, extracts the $250 checks.

We are headed for Veracruz, 250 miles to the southeast.

I wind up in the supercharged Dodge with Patty and the three "participants": Moshe, his friend Jim Drazen, also from Cambridge, and Max Lan, a Mexican therapist. Max is a floppy Pancho Villa look-alike, an architect by training and a therapist by choice—the bohemian branch of a cultivated family tree. He is divorced and the father of three children; his son, Eduardo, is part of our caravan.

Max, Moshe and Jim are infatuated with treatment; during the trip, the three of them talk endlessly of Rolfing, gestalt, structural integration, bioenergetics, psychedelics; they compare the styles of Roquet and his various disciples; they discuss the effects of different drugs like sommeliers debating the nuances of great Bordeaux.

As we drive along, the landscape changes constantly: from the arid deserts of Mexico City, to snow-capped volcanoes, to jungle-shrouded mountains, to the Big Sur of the coast, to the lush pineapple and papaya groves of the south.

We arrive in Veracruz at 10 p.m.; it has taken 14 hours to travel 250 miles. Salvador's family stays with relatives; Moshe, Max, Jim and I are delivered to the Mocambo, a beautiful resort hotel. No hardwood floors tonight.

April 3. Salvador's motto is *Apurese y esperese:* "hurry up and wait." Today we wait. And wait. And wait. Salvador said he would pick us up at the hotel at 10 a.m.; we are still waiting at 3 p.m. No one seems to know what his plans are, the whys of what he does. I am told that it is all a part of the treatment. I am told that the trip to Santa Maria is an integral part of the session; nothing we experience during it is accidental, Max explains—it is all of Salvador's design. The countryside we see, the people we ride and sleep with, the developing relationships, the erratic rhythms and discarded schedules, the lack of explanations, the limbo of cause and effect—all are elements of an elaborate psychological program. I wonder.

Max, Moshe and Jim discuss the effects of different drugs like sommeliers debating the nuances of great Bordeaux

The unknown prompts speculation. Moshe is convinced that the first session will take place tonight; he is fasting in preparation.

We pass the afternoon on the veranda of the Mocambo, sipping Cokes and Carte Blancas. A soft breeze drifts in off the Gulf; I feel as decadent as any sun-kissed tourist. Moshe, Max and Jim continue to belabor self-introspection, discussing various therapies, trading psychological horror stories. All three, I learn, are Jewish . . . which makes me the only goy gringo.

Finally, shortly after 3 p.m., Salvador and his assistants arrive. We leave Veracruz at 4:00, but almost immediately stop for gas. And promptly stop again for a snack. And shortly thereafter stop for dinner. It is 9 p.m. before we reach Tuxtepec. Another day, another 100 miles.

There will be no session tonight.

April 4. Another day of waiting and false starts. If this trip is any indication, Mexico is not the land of *mañana*; it is the land of *quiza el ano proximo*—"maybe next year."

We were to leave for Santa Maria at 9 a.m., but, at 4 p.m., are only four blocks from the Hotel Tuxtepec. In the morning, we wandered about the city, and traded our Renault and Super Bee for a pickup. When it appeared that we were ready to go, Salvador remembered a portable stereo he wanted to buy; it was for the session, someone said. Unfortunately, the stores had closed for the heat of the day.

So we are waiting some more.

While we wait in the pale shadows of a 110-degree afternoon, Moshe tells me about his first meeting with Salvador: "Last May, I learned that he was going to do a session in New Hampshire—it was supposed to be strictly for therapists. I drove up with a few other people who were involved.

"During the session, I realized that no one was into love—no one wants love: they want power, security, sex. I got into the pain of being a therapist, of getting people to open up to love; I went through unfinished relationships—my first marriage, my love for my daughter. It was an incredibly painful experience."

When the session was over, Moshe had kissed Salvador and told him that he loved him. Since then, he has had three more sessions; during one, he became so angry about the "ugliness" he had created during his life that he smashed his hands against the floor and broke bones in both of them. But the infatuation persists: Moshe, Max and Jim are less patients than adoring disciples of Salvador, the pusher-priest.

We escape Tuxtepec at 5 p.m.; after hours of contortions and contusions in the back of the pickup, we are told the obvious: we will not reach Santa Maria today. We hole up instead at an adobe Hilton in Playa Vincente, a dog-days town straight out of *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid.* There have been problems here recently—disputes concerning the government's appropriation of land; two days ago, 13 people were killed.

This trip is becoming too hairy for comfort.

April 5. The calendar says only five days, but it seems that we have been traveling together forever. I can barely imagine not being with this group of people, not trudging endlessly on. Salvador has transformed us into a strange, self-contained family. He has removed us from familiar surroundings, isolated us from relatives and friends, controlled the length and content of our days, shattered our systems of cause and effect, and manipulated our expectations and appre-

hensions. It is like a weekend encounter session . . . except that here there is no exit.

Before, we toyed with the Sierras—viewing them from a distance, threading a way among them; today, we are to wrestle them. We leave Playa Vincente early, quickly, prodded by our fears; after a few miles we abandon the highway for a humble dirt road that climbs like Sir Edmund Hillary. Soon we are adrift in the mountains, surrounded by an endless green ocean of 1,000-foot waves.

The road coils around and over the peaks like an interminable snake, its surface etched with axle-eating ruts. After a score of close calls, it dead-ends by a jungle river where pack burros are meant to meet us; they don't. After waiting for several hours, we retreat to Puxmetacan, a nearby Indian village.

Tonight, we will sleep on the dirt floor of a Stone Age tool shed.

April 6. We are in Santa Maria! I can scarcely believe it; I had begun to think of this village as a new Atlantis: a psychological Holy Grail. It is, unfortunately, all too real.

Our party set out from Puxmetacan early today, arriving at the river at 9:00. The women, children and gringos were abandoned to the wilderness, deposited without ceremony or instruction on the path to Santa Maria. Salvador and an assistant, the only ones who knew the way, went off with Max to locate burros.

The rest of us were left to negotiate an impossible obstacle course, an ordeal of rocky mountains tied together by a fragile jungle trail. Our sweltering, unplanned caravan promptly disintegrated into three less-well-planned bands: the older children ran on ahead; the younger ones, their mother, Moshe and Jim brought up the rear. I spent the first half of the day between them, with Patty—she is vivacious and pretty, the perfect traveling companion; the second half with Jim.

He is 39, an unredeemed law school and Wharton School of Business graduate, and an emotional stiff despite his hip lingo, Jewish Afro and stash of brewer's yeast. He is divorced, the father of two sons, and living with a divorcee with two children. He went into analysis to get in touch with his emotions and to find out if he and his roommate were suited; now, after two years of assorted disciplines, his emotions remain frozen, and he still wonders if he has found the right woman. Jim has had two acid sessions in New Hampshire.

We arrived here in Santa Maria at 6:00 this evening; the first Indian we met sported an "I Love My Hooker Headers" decal on his shirt—a Xerox copier could not have seemed more out of place. The village, with its few hundred inhabitants, is all that the photographs suggested: a depressing ghetto of clay and sticks perched on naked rock. Skeleton dogs stalk its bleak streets. Salvador has chosen a penal colony for his sessions.

Perhaps it is appropriate: Moshe remarked today that Roquet is a master of bad trips. "Salvador," he said, "is a pusher of death."

April 7. Salvador, his family and Guillermo Borja, his young assistant who is a second-year medical student, spent the morning and afternoon sorting medicine; now the doctor is treating sick Mixes. Each year, during his visit to Santa Maria, Salvador spends several days caring for the Indians: he is the only doctor most of them will ever see. Moshe, Max and Jim are fasting in preparation for tonight's session; they seem weary and afraid—men consumed by inner demons. They withdraw from our company, and seclude themselves in the hut where the session will take place, like kamikaze preparing to die.

I cannot reconcile their enthusiasm with their dread.

9 p.m.: Lanterns still burn in the

AUTO SHOW

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dispensario across the way; I wait with the pilgrims in a room that is silent and black.

9:30 p.m.: Guillermo comes to tell us that there will be no session tonight: Salvador is still treating patients and concerned with other matters. Moshe is painfully disappointed; I begin to understand how Gary Gilmore felt.

If there is no session tomorrow, there will be no session at all, for we all have prior pressing commitments.

April 8. Good Friday. During the day, Salvador continues to treat the Mixes, the exhausted trio continue to fast; they are to receive datura tonight.

10:10 p.m.: It is beginning. We have brought the portable stereo, the records, some coffee and food, straw mats, sleeping bags and two lanterns to the session room. The room is 20 by 30 feet—dirt floor, adobe walls, thatched roof—a barren, unpleasant place. The lanterns, hanging from a pole, yield more shadow than light. The night is already cold.

Moshe, Max and Jim position their mats and sleeping bags along one wall. Salvador flips through the records, sorting them out. I watch. There is no one else in the room aside from Guillermo, who lights a fire in one corner. Guillermo is short, dark, mustachioed and very macho; for all his strutting, he is frequently short of solutions. He is Salvador's right hand during these sessions.

The crackling orange campfire is the only point of warmth, of comfort, in the room.

The men say their goodbyes to one another, like soldiers taking leave of their families before a war. "You have a good trip too," they say, hugging one another fondly. "See you in an eternity," Jim tells me. They are weary and apprehensive, but committed to their course. They have come too far to turn back.

The three of them sit on their mats. Moshe is wearing his red and green yarmulke; a white prayer shawl is draped over his shoulders—his faith does not desert him. Guillermo gives them copies of the Hartman Value Inventory, a two-page psychological profile; it asks them to rate such phrases as "a baby," "torture a person in a concentration camp," "I love my work" and "I curse the day I was born." There is barely enough light to read.

The questionnaires are filled out, collected and put aside—unread.

Guillermo selects one of the record albums and puts it on the stereo. Unexpectedly, in the midst of this primitive black wilderness, we are blessed with an orchestra and Paul and Linda McCartney. Guillermo sets a coffee pot on the fire, and spills enough to drown it. Halfway through the first side of *RAM*, the stereo groans into silence.

Guillermo leaves the fire for the stereo 15 feet away; he flips all of its switches, then announces, "This apparatus is no longer work." The session cannot continue. Moshe is very upset.

"Is it possible to borrow a record player from town?" he asks.

"No," says Salvador. "Everyone has gone to bed."

Moshe and Jim attempt repairs with a flashlight, penknife and jar of Vaseline; Guillermo resuscitates the fire. "Have faith," Salvador advises; he lies down on his mat, and goes to sleep as the others continue to work.

12:20 a.m.: Incredibly, the stereo has been fixed; the coffee is bubbling away. The three seekers wait on their mats. Guillermo asks their weights, and calculates dosages. There has been a change: the subjects wil not be given datura as promised. Datura, also known as devil's weed, is derived from a plant that

THE RISE AND FALL OF ACID THERAPY

LSD (or psychedelic) therapy isn't new. LSD-25 was discovered in 1938, and its consciousness-altering properties first recognized in 1943; following World War II, it was tested extensively by both medical and psychiatric researchers. Its unique ability to reduce ego defenses, permitting unconscious material to rise to the surface, led to its application by hundreds of therapists.

The drug proved particularly effective in the treatment of alcoholics and terminal patients. Long-range programs at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Topeka, Kansas, and elsewhere showed that LSD therapy for alcoholism was productive in 75 percent of all cases; and studies involving terminal cancer patients demonstrated that the drug was an effective painkiller with major psychological benefits.

LSD, in short, seemed a promising addition to the pharmacologist's shelf. It was not until 1962 that it began to fall into public and professional disrepute.

Its sudden and thus far irreversible fall from grace owed much to Timothy Leary. Leary, a clinical psychologist at Harvard's Center for Research in Human Personality, had sampled psilocybin mushrooms during a 1960 visit to Cuernavaca, Mexico. When he returned to Cambridge, he and a colleague, Dr. Richard Alpert (now Baba Ram Dass), began investigating psilocybin and LSD. The inclusion of undergraduate students in some of their experiments led in time to university warnings, an investigation by law enforcement agencies and sensationalized exposure in the press.

In the summer of 1962, Leary and a few other researchers founded the International Federation for Internal Freedom (IFIF) Psychedelic Training Center in Zihuatanejo, Mexico. During the following school year, Leary and Alpert were forced to leave Harvard, and, in June of 1963, they were asked to leave Mexico.

At about the same time, thousands of young people were discovering the bliss and black abyss of blackmarket acid; by 1969, an estimated 1 to 2 million Americans would have tried it. The epidemic of interest, and the uncontrolled use of such a volatile catalyst, created a spate of horror stories: a murder, a suicide, a permanent psychosis. The common martini precipitated more havoc, but LSD got the bad name.

In 1965, Sandoz Laboratories, the only legal source of LSD, stopped distributing it and turned over their supplies of the drug to the National Institute of Mental Health. In the same year, Congress amended the Drug Control Act, making it illegal to manufacture or to sell any psychedelics.

Government permits were issued to approved researchers, but, because of professional reservations and public opposition, they were granted with growing reluctance. The number of LSD projects dropped sharply—from 70 in 1964, to 31 in 1966, to 16 in 1967. Today, there are virtually none.

grows wild hereabouts—an exotic hallucinogen so powerful that some users have wound up in mental wards. Moshe and Jim have been "working up" to datura, and are disappointed to learn that they will not receive it. Instead, each man will receive LSD, followed by two hits of ketamine, the "drug of no resistance"—a fast-acting general anesthetic with hallucinogenic properties. No explanation is offered for the change.

12:30 a.m.: The stereo quits again; Moshe and Jim resume repairs. Salvador awakes, sees them working—"Try, try, try," he says, and goes back to sleep. The man is not to be believed.

The repairs are successful; now we have rock and roll—"Johnny, Johnny, Johnny" enlivens our grimy cave. Moshe is not amused; he seems deeply troubled. "I'm going through some pretty bad spaces," he admits.

"Do you want to back out?" Jim asks. *I* think "Yes" . . . but Moshe doesn't answer; he sits silently, a brooding demon wrapped in shadows.

Shirley Bassey serenades us; softly, Max sings along: ". . . impossible to live without you. . . ." He stands and begins to dance. Jim joins him, doing stylized yoga movements in time to the music. Moshe sits mute, unmoving. Finally, he relents: he stands and dances energetically, erotically; it is *Soul Train* time in Santa Maria!

One by one, they tire and sit down. Guillermo gives Moshe and Jim black masks that would look at home in an SM shop. He has forgotten Jim's name "Mike?" he asks.

"No, Jim," laughs Jim. "It's okay." He kisses Guillermo in forgiveness. I would be less generous, I think, with someone entrusted with my very life. We are one mask short; Max is blindfolded with a coiled undershirt.

The three of them sit forlorn on their thin straw mats. They look like the victims of a medieval torturer—imprisoned in a pit, suffused with cold, fatigued by anxiety and the rigors of the past week, cast into darkness by their captors. During the session, they will see nothing, and nothing will be said to them; their only link with Salvador will be music. The music is his control: he will orchestrate their trips with it.

Shirley Bassey gives way to a marching band. "Oh, boy," laughs Moshe, "'Yankee Doodle' for the Yankees!" Salvador switches to a Joan Baez album. Guillermo cuts tabs of LSD—little orange aspirins—inside their cellophane envelopes. "Come on, guys, give us the stuff!" Moshe yells. "I'll take my stuff to fly!" Max and Jim wait quietly.

1:15 a.m.: Guillermo places two tabs of LSD in Moshe's hand; Moshe pops them down. "Okay," he says. He smacks his lips as though they are very dry. He stands and resumes dancing. "Fate! Fate! Fate and trust! Fate and trust!" he chants. Max sings along with Joan Baez: "In the morning, when we rise. . . ."

Salvador sits on his mat; he snacks on a large bag of animal crackers.

"My god, how long does LSD take to act?" Moshe demands.

"Twenty minutes," says Jim.

1:20 a.m.: Guillermo gives Jim LSD. Salvador puts on *Music of the Jewish People*. The Jewish trip begins. "Oh, God! Oh, God!" Moshe yells. "Salvador! Salvador!" Salvador doesn't answer, but watches Moshe closely. Jim groans, lies down, and folds his hand across his chest like a proper cadaver.

1:40 a.m.: Jim finds his sleeping bag, climbs into it, and zips it shut. Max asks for a blanket and is given one; he also receives his dose of LSD. Moshe sits quietly. "Oh, God!" he suddenly shouts. "Oh, wow! It's powerful stuff."

The patients seclude themselves in a hut where the session will take place, like kamikazes preparing to die

He lies down, his black mask staring blindly at the thatched ceiling. "Ah, this is such delightful music," he sighs. "Ah . . . Oh, God . . . Oh, God."

He sits back up. "How do you give your soul to someone else?" he yells. "Oh, God . . . Where's Salvador? Salvador, Salvador, I wish I could talk to you." He is gasping for air. "Surrender! Surrender! Oh, my God . . . This is incredible! This is the best music I ever . . ."

Moshe stands, and shuffles slowly in a small circle; his hands feel for obstacles. "Salvador, Salvador. I missed you; I missed this place. I yearn for you . . . Where is he? Where is he!" He begins to belch loudly. "Oh, God! Remove the barrier from my soul . . . Oh, please, God!" He starts to heave. "I'm ready to vomit . . . A pail—something to vomit into . . . Give me a pail. Give me a pail!" His body is convulsed with retching. "Well, if there won't be a pail, I'll just vomit all over the place, because my stomach has been killing me. I can't eat anything without burping for two hours. What the fuck is going on?" He continues belching. "This is what's going on all the fucking time."

Max laughs. "The pigs are around," he says.

"We're worse than pigs," answers Moshe. "Pigs don't vomit; they eat their shit. A pail! I don't want someone crawling around in my shit. Come on, a pail! Guillermo, there's nothing to vomit into." Moshe falls to the floor and searches with his hands; he finds a small hole in the ground. "Okay." He wipes the edge of the hole, and perches over it on all fours. "Well, Max, it's my turn to vomit." He blows his nose into the hole. His whole body seems to be gagging. "Oh, shit! I have nothing to vomit . . . Out already! Out already! What the fuck is in your stomach! Oh, God, this fucking retching!"

Suddenly, Guillermo rushes up to me. He seems very concerned. "Do you know how many kilos are in a pound?" he whispers. I wonder if he is calculating the dosage of the ketamine to come . . . or of the LSD already administered. Salvador stands by himself, gazing into the fire.

2:15 a.m.: Salvador puts on a new record: *Mushroom Ceremony of the Mazatec Indians of Mexico*. An old woman and man cackle, chant and sing in a nightmare language—it is the sound of insanity. Max laughs hysterically, as though he has lost his son; Jim laughs maniacally. Moshe rests against the wall. "You guys are nuts," he tells them. "You guys are nuts!"

"Are you there, Moshe?" Max asks.

"Yes, I'm just trying to figure out what it's all about. Shit and piss; heaven and hell. Who are the devils . . . it's all the same. God, scramble my brains! I don't need them. I don't have any of the answers! This is driving me crazy." Max and Jim continue laughing. "What's so fucking funny! Where are you at? . . . Well, it's all for real, Max. Stand up and be a fucking man. Kvetching! Stand up and be a fucking man! Stop being a yenta!"

"Why can't you let me be what I am?" Max asks. He begins to laugh again.

"I don't know what's so fucking funny," Moshe says. "I don't know what's happening—I'm about to flip! This is so fucking absurd, so fucking absurd . . . Shut up, Jimmy! Shut up for awhile . . . The stakes are high—this is for real! If you survive this one, you can survive anything. This is a horror show! What the hell is this all about? . . . My flesh is trembling . . ."

Their laughter drowns his words.

"The funny goes on because they are afraid," Guillermo whispers to me. "How is it you say . . . wind up? But when you stop—unwind? They are unwinding—it will stop soon."

3 a.m.: We have heard *Chana 4 Etudes Choregraphequis* and *Japanese NOH Music*; Guillermo changes the records once more. He walks over to Moshe, Max and Jim and makes the sign of the cross above them; he turns to me and smiles.

I cannot believe what Salvador has done! The new record is *Hitler's Inferno in Words and Music 1932-1945*. And the victims, once more, are Jews. Instantly, horribly, this cold smoky room on a Mexican mountain top is transformed. We are part of the holocaust.

Moshe is rigid, on his knees. "Take it! Take it! Take it all! Take it!" he screams over and over again. Hitler's voice harangues back at him. Moshe rips off his mask; Guillermo replaces it without comment. "What did we do to deserve this? What did we do? God, what did we do! You could spend the rest of your life doing this sort of shit. Forget this crap!"

The hut resounds with martial music and the thunder of hobnailed boots. Moshe leaps to his feet, stands like a Samurai awaiting attack—pelvis thrust forward, legs bent at the knees, arms cocked in front of him, hands fused into fists. Each muscle strains with energy; behind the dark beard, behind the black mask, his face contorts with rage. It is an incredible, beautiful posture.

"Stop the fucking music!" he bellows. "Stop it!"

His body shakes uncontrollably. He falls to the floor and rolls in the dirt. "God . . . God. . . . *God!* Salvador? *Salvador!* what did they do? What did they do? What for, father? Salvador, tell me! Why, why? Max, Max! Why did they do this?" Moshe's prayer shawl and bright velvet shirt are ruined with dirt; his hair is lacquered with dust. Max sobs hysterically. "Souls of innocent children!" Moshe screams. "Salvador, where are you! Oh, God . . ."

This is Salvador's magic. He is very good at it.

"Forgive . . . forget . . . be big! Be fucking big! Buy a Volkswagen! Mercedes Benz!" Moshe screams. He listens to the drumbeat of German voices. "That's right! That's how they killed. Here! Here! Lives! Get those fucking lives! Those fucking Nazis are still marching around—they're everywhere!"

Jim is catatonic in his nylon crypt; Max wails away in Yiddish. "It's okay . . . it's okay," Moshe tells him. "It's all right—you'll have Sabbath. It's never too late. This is awful! . . . Salvador always screws me into total madness. This is real lives! . . . No games. No games!

Seeker and savior: "Salvador always screws me into total madness," Moshe (top) wails. "He is a pusher of death, a master of bad trips"

"Enough! Enough! Enough! I can't take the suffering anymore. Enough already!" He curls into a fetal position on the dirt floor.

4 a.m.: Jim seems to be sleeping; Max cries inconsolably. Guillermo waves a portable tape recorder about Moshe's head, taunting him with Chinese flutes, as Salvador had tormented Max a few moments before. "Let me out of this!" Moshe screams. His voice is sore. "I can't take it no more! I can't take it! Please don't give me no more. Please turn it off. I can't stand anymore!" He attempts to brush the recorder away; Guillermo repositions it inches from his ear. "Oh god, Salvador—where are you?" He tears off his mask; Guillermo replaces it. "My eyes! I can't take it! I don't know what they gave me, but I'm sure crazy. Salvador, what is datura? . . . Because I'm apart. Give me some water." He takes off his mask; Guillermo puts it back on. "Enough! Enough! Enough, my god! Is this going to last forever? I can't take it anymore. I'm tired and thirsty, and you must have given us ketamine because everything lasts for a million, million . . . a million, million, million . . . of something . . ." He falls exhausted onto the floor.

4:20 a.m.: Salvador is sleeping again. His three patients are coming down. Jim is still comatose; Max is sobbing softly. Moshe is sitting in the corner, a strange dirt-encrusted gargoyle. "Please stop crying," he says. "Stop crying—please . . . This is like life . . . there's no end to misery, there's no end to pain. We can go on and on creating pain. Being lost here is so awful. So awful! Will this ever end?" He shakes his head, beats on his chest with the palms of his hands. "Got to shake this shit. Water! . . . Stop crying! It hasn't been so bad—it's been awful!"

"Is it over?" asks Max.

"I fucking hope so because I can't stand it anymore . . . Shake it off . . . Shake it off. . . ."

5:12 a.m.: Guillermo fills a hypodermic syringe with ketamine. He takes Moshe's left arm, rolls up the shirtsleeve. "Oh, God, no!" Moshe screams. "Salvador, have mercy!" The inch-long needle plunges to the hilt in his upper arm. "Agggh!"

He shrieks and writhes, but makes no move to pull away. Guillermo extracts the needle; Moshe falls against the wall. "To life! To life!" he bellows. "Shake this shit off. To life! No, no . . . Back to consciousness. Consciousness!" He collapses on the floor, curls into a little ball. "Let me off! I want to be born!" He rips his mask off again

and again. "It's a bad trip. It's a bad trip! Wake up!" Salvador stands over him, watching. "I'm lost! I'm lost! I'm life! I'm life! Give me life—to life!" He rips the mask off again. He tries to stand, but erumbles. He is broken—there are no whole bones left within him. Outside, daylight breaks gently over the mountains; a rooster crows. The night is nearly over.

5:35 a.m.: Moshe lies prostrate on the floor. Salvador shines a flashlight into his eyes: they are open, but unseeing. The mask is no longer needed. "Oh, shit!" Moshe moans. "I'm lost . . . I'm lost. I'm lost forever. Oh, God, I'm gone! I'm gone! . . . I'm thirsty. I'm so thirsty! Love me—give me some water!" He attempts to rise, but collapses; his voice is barely audible. "Stop pretending."

"*Por favor* . . . " he sighs.

Moshe is now unconscious.

6 a.m.: The lantern has been allowed to die. The room is dark and peaceful, soothed by an orchestra of insects, birds and reptiles: *Environments: Dawn and Dusk in the Okefenokee Swamp.* It sounds like the birth of the world. Guillermo tells me, "We are through—no more ketamine."

"No?" I am surprised . . . but immensely relieved. "Why?" I ask him.

He gestures towards Salvador; he sits by the fire, drinking coffee, munching on animal crackers. "He no explain—ever," Guillermo says. "Now we can do therapy."

"What kind of therapy?"

"We do talking," he says.

6:10 a.m.: Max awakes to the warm, pulsing lullaby of *Sleep Gently in the Womb—Gentle Sounds for a Baby in the Atmosphere of the Womb.* The sounds are other-worldly, but strangely comforting. Jim and Moshe return to us more slowly; finally, Moshe climbs to a sitting position. He is the most abject living thing I have ever seen: a battered, brutalized human being; he reminds me of the dogs of Santa Maria. He has been tarred with tears, and sweat, and phlegm, and vomit, and ground into the earth beneath the heel of a psychic boot. His eyes are filled with terror. His hands clutch frantically at the throat of his shirt. He trembles in fear of a beating he knows will come; he shrinks from his inevitable annihilation.

"What happened?" Salvador asks.

Moshe glances nervously from person to person. "I went to Auschwitz," he says. His voice is weak and broken, strangled by the fresh memory: "I burned in the ovens at Auschwitz!" he screams. "I burned in a tank on the Sinai! I burned! . . . It was always the same: live flesh turning into flames!"

His eyes are wild with pain.

Suddenly, he notices Jim sleeping in the corner—his face stiffens, goes white with horror. He drops to the ground, and crawls across the room, dragging his body behind him as though it were paralyzed. He claws at Jim, falls across his sleeping bag. "My kid! My kid!" he shrieks. He begins to cry hysterically, out-of-control, pounding the cold earth with his fists.

He is still in Auschwitz. He has discovered the body of his son.

This is too much for me; I can no longer take notes. . . .

April 10. Yesterday, after they had regained consciousness, Salvador spent only half an hour talking to Moshe, Max and Jim. They sat in a small circle, faintly illuminated by the window and half-opened door. Guillermo translated Salvador's sleepy chatter: Do you have a family? Oh, two sons? And your wife? Ah, divorced. . . .

I could not believe how inane the

The hut resounds with the thunder of hobnailed boots. Instantly, horribly, we are part of the holocaust

questions seemed. These men had lived through a nightmare, and Salvador was discussing crab grass.

It was time to return to reality.

When we left the hut, we found a group of Indians waiting outside—they had been drawn by the music and the noise of Moshe's anguish. Moshe was delighted to see them; he danced for them, whirling like a dervish across the hilltop, his soiled white prayer shawl streaming behind him. The Indians looked at him as though he were a madman.

Before I could tell whether he was celebrating the session or the fact that it had ended, his celebration was over.

There was little time, and we packed quickly, without resting. We hiked out from Santa Maria, then drove off as an incredible storm—the first of the rainy season—began. Jim remained as formal as ever, but Max became sullen and a bit belligerent; Moshe settled slowly into exhaustion as we drove down through the mountains. We had been without sleep for nearly 40 hours when we reached Tuxtepec.

Today, we slept late.

Before we left for Veracruz, Moshe, Max and Jim got together to review the session. All of them, it turned out, were disappointed—disappointed because they had not received datura, disappointed because they had been shortchanged on ketamine, disappointed because at the last minute Salvador had tried to up their fees. "I have such a desperate need to create saviors," lamented Moshe, "but they keep turning out to be men." The three had few memories of the six-hour session itself, and what little they recalled was unpleasant—they remembered feeling impatient and angry with one another. And the feelings had persisted.

Finally, Max and Jim rallied to the faith: the session, they decided, was imperfect, but rewarding. Moshe withheld his verdict.

April 11. Moshe and I are on Eastern Airlines Flight 904, an hour out of Boston. It seems impossible: such technology, such stewardesses, such service. Two days ago, burros seemed an advanced form of transportation. Moshe is belching nervously; he seems very upset. "I'm afraid," he tells me.

"Afraid of what?" I ask.

"Afraid of what's happened . . . afraid of what lies ahead."

I begin to wonder if he has lingered too long in Salvador's psychedelic mine field.

April 21. Moshe called today. I barely recognized his voice—it was weak and ever so far away, the dry rustle of a dead man. He confessed that he was in "terrible" shape.

"What's wrong?" I asked.

"My ego is disintegrating," he said.

"I'm more open to life, but I'm also terrified . . . I'm beginning to wonder if it's going to get any better."

July 12. A final chat with Moshe. He is feeling somewhat steadier now.

"I look back on it as a very painful experience," he says. "It took six weeks before I was able to begin integrating the material. I feel a bit stronger emotionally, but I don't know if it was worth the price.

"It was very painful, going through that Nazi trip—it was unbearable. There was no love in that session.

"Since then, I've tripped twice with people I really care for, people who care for me, and it was incredibly good—I learned a great deal each time.

"If I had to do it all over again, I wouldn't. I'd go along for the trip, enjoy the scenery and Salvador's family, but decline the session. It wasn't a healthy thing."●

"I'd like to dedicate this sexy new body to my Dad, in heaven!"

Gilda!

BY TRACY YOUNG

America's been sleeping around a lot, but it hasn't had a sweetheart in years. Probably not since Doris Day played footsie through the bathroom wall with Rock Hudson in *Pillow Talk*.

Farrah Fawcett and the rest of the bionic beauties are about as romantic as cellular mitosis; spacey Sissy Spacek and the skeletal Shelley Duvall are mere enticements to a kind of Los Angeles ennui; but Gilda Radner, resident cuckoo on NBC's *Saturday Night*, is another story altogether.

Gilda Radner is the kind of girl for whom our boys would go whistling cheerfully off to war. A bebop baby like Francine Evans in *New York, New York*, she jitterbugs when she walks and gets all misty-eyed when a fella sends her flowers. Gilda Radner is the kind of girl who'd be over THERE! entertaining the troops, or playing Lucille Ball as Rosie the Riveter, or at least rolling bandages. But there are no more whistling wars, so instead of rolling bandages Gilda is doing Geraldo Rivera's *One-to-One* telethon, or riding a bike through Flushing to raise money to fight leukemia, or handing out awards at the *Village Voice* Obie presentations—being unnerved by the low-rent arrogance of the occasion and thrilled when Robert Duvall comes up to her backstage and whispers: "You've got great legs."

He should have said "great gams." How about gams? Offensive to women? Forget it—women are shaving their legs again. Can't get it up? Laugh it off. Want a relationship? How about a romance? Show me the avant-garde, and I'll show you *Saturday Night*. Nothing's that serious, and the words of the prophets are on the Beatles white album: "You know it's gonna be . . . *shoo-be-doo* . . . all right . . . "

The country's cooling off—playing footsie again—and Gilda Radner may just be America's new sweetheart.

Thursday, May 20. On *Saturday Night* the Not Ready For Prime Time Players will do the last show before going off the air until next fall, and NBC's studio 8H fairly vibrates with a kind of fagged-out, end-of-term mania. Laraine Newman lies face down on the floor of what will become the Carters' living room while one of the show's writers massages her calf muscles. She looks like an exhausted high jumper between attempts at seven feet. Chevy Chase wanders by, the Graduate who may just have decided on plastics. The cameramen dolly back and forth, setting up their shots, seemingly blasé about all this adolescent silliness.

I am sitting way up above the floor in the yellow bleachers which on Saturday night will be filled with the heirs to Woodstock Nation, and after a half hour or so Gilda scurries up to join me. She is considerably taller and skinnier than she looks on television, and she has the myopic's unnerving habit of sticking her face right in yours when she talks. She digs into her voluminous purse, then offers me a brown paper bag filled with hideous-looking penny candy. I reach into my purse for a cigarette.

"What've ya got in there?" she says. "Got any candy for me?"

I offer her a piece of bittersweet chocolate which she pops in her mouth, then makes a face.

"I don't like this," she says through a large bite. "It tastes like it might be good for you."

We discuss candy for a few minutes, then I ask Gilda if she writes any of her material.

"I don't really like to write that much because I don't like . . . uh . . . being alone . . . Except . . . " she says, turning petulant, " . . . there was my Hallowe'en monologue which I wanted to do more than anything because I wrote it myself, but it was cut out of the show . . . I was dressed as a princess, you know . . . " she brightens, " . . . with a little star on a stick,

PHOTOGRAPH BY GEORGE OSREMSKI

and I was talkin' about Hallowe'ens in my life and how it always rained every Hallowe'en and you had to wear a coat? So I always had to be a princess with a coat on . . . or a clown with a coat on . . . or a cow! with a coat on . . . And I said, 'There's only one thing worse than goin' out trick or treatin' as a princess with a coat on, and that's goin' out trick or treatin' as a princess with a coat on . . . and your *Dad* followin' you in the Cadillac! . . . So I, I say, 'I beat that, and the next year I went out as a coat!' . . . "

Anne Beatts, one of S/N's writers, joins us. "How was lunch with Herb Schlosser?" she asks Gilda.

"It was like goin' out to lunch with your father," Gilda says, "and you want to tell him what you did in school that day and he tells a dirty joke."

Gilda's paternal analogy is hardly promiscuous. To her, S/N is a family, a group of erstwhile strangers who've been living these past two years in the hothouse atmosphere of a weekly live television show. Weird. For a long time Gilda's closest connection to reality was the bag lady who works the concourse under Rockefeller Center. In such an environment emotions boil down to a fairly primitive level: Lorne Michaels, S/N's producer, has evolved into an ambivalently regarded father figure; the writers and performers do not so much compete as engage in sibling rivalry ("I would be in this constant dialogue of being hurt all the time," Gilda explains, " . . . of saying, 'Why does *Laraine* get to be Peter Pan?!' . . . "); guest hosts are treated as people who've come to dinner; even the crew gets in on the act. (Margaret, the wardrobe mistress, plays a kind of sweet Mom. Whenever one of the gang utters a curse word in her presence, they immediately whirl around and say, "Oops, sorry Margaret"—atavistic behavior which Margaret finds endlessly amusing.)

"It's changing now," Gilda says. "It's like everyone knows eventually they'll have to leave the family, like go off to college, y'know? I used to say—about a year and a half ago—that if we all spent too much time thinkin' about our own individual futures and what we're gonna get *out* of this, we'd never get the show off the ground . . . So I tried not to think too much about my future . . . But this year's gonna be different because people are gonna be thinkin' about graduating, and 'What am I gonna do next?' . . . I'm frightened about next year."

Ambivalent would be more accurate. Gilda, for the past six months, has been riding on the crest of a wave . . . it is whispered that she and Belushi are the artistic backbone of S/N, the only real heavies . . . Opportunity has put its finger to the doorbell . . . Rumors of projects—a TV special with Lily Tomlin, Gilda's own special—waft through the still backstage air . . . And Gilda wants it. On the other hand, she's seen people in just her position wipe out.

"Listen," Gilda says, changing the subject, "I've got to get something real to eat . . . "

"Like a donut?"

"Yeah, or maybe a piece of cake . . . I'll be right back," she says, hopping up from her seat and bounding down the stairs like Wonderland's white rabbit.

My own interpretation of the S/N community tends toward a more sinister kind of family, runs more to visions of hitmen in Hawaiian shirts, if only because so much of the show's humor, the stuff that isn't downright silly, is comedy of intimidation, like that *National Lampoon* cover that read: "Buy This Magazine or We'll Shoot This Dog." So on a certain level Gilda's version is a kind of idealized fantasy, a fairy tale in which she gets to play Baby Bear. On a certain level it's psychic camouflage; after all, who'd hurt a baby?

Gilda's gotten so popular she can't even go to the dentist without discovering he's invited a 'friend' to come watch

Either way, the family is wary of strangers, journalists being the worst kind of interloper. These days it seems that the only families willing to suffer the embrace of documentarians are real families like the Louds, nuclear families about to implode. Stars on the other hand have taken to their closets. They're not about to spill the beans for a couple hundred thousand readers when they can do "themselves" on TV in front of millions. Everybody's got media smarts, and, worst of all, journalists are acting like wimps—a recent interview with the S/N gang in *Playboy* reeked of fear!

I am thinking along these lines—and cursing myself because I also know that dealing with these wiley stars involves an inordinate amount of time hanging around feeling like a schmuck—so when Beatts invites me to the Green Room to smoke a joint I accept gladly. When in doubt, up the ante.

About 20 minutes later we drift back downstairs, but in the meantime Gilda has disappeared. We begin a hazy, Marienbadish search through the back corridors until someone points mutely toward Gilda's dressing room. Anne knocks on the door. No answer. She knocks again. At last a tiny voice mumbles something unintelligible. The door opens a crack. Anne and Gilda whisper through the crack. After what seems a long long time I am ushered in. Gilda has been lying on the floor, in front of a huge TV set from which emanates no picture, just a bright white light, and she is clutching a stuffed racoon that looks very much like her.

"I just decided that I didn't want any responsibility," Gilda whines. "I decided I didn't want to do the show . . . and I didn't want to do this interview!" She smacks me with the racoon.

I realize that a version of my worst nightmare—having to interview Louise Lasser—is coming true. Abruptly Gilda's attention switches back to the racoon, a gift from an admirer.

"Ohh, what am I supposed to do nowww?" She seems on the verge of tears.

"Aw, maybe I'll just fuck him," she switches again, then laughs.

"Why don't you send it back to him with a pair of your underpants on its head?" Beatts suggests.

Gilda has innumerable male admirers, and she never knows quite how to deal with them. One time a bunch of guys from the Coast Guard sent her a jacket, and S/N writer Michael O'Donoghue told her not to put her hands in the pockets 'cause they'd all jerked off in them, so for weeks Gilda wore the jacket but was afraid to put her hands in the pockets.

"I get letters from this guy in prison . . . " she says, making it sound like a question, " . . . and he goes on and on with this stuff, like, 'Come see me and your clit will be in heaven' . . . " She looks vaguely offended, pauses for a beat, and says, " . . . And, y'know, sometimes I think I'll *go*."

Gilda's gotten so popular she can't even go to the dentist without discovering that he's invited a 'friend' to come watch, just watch! So there's this stranger standing there the whole time gawking while she's leaning back in the big chair, drooling all over herself.

Tracy Young last wrote for New Times *on Lily Tomlin and hasn't spoken to her since.*

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"If I were you," I say, "I'd be afraid to go to the gynecologist."

"Hah!" Gilda squeals. "One time I went to the doctor for a check-up and I had all my clothes off . . . and he started telling jokes! Y'know? Like, 'Didja hear the one about the guy' . . . I just put all my clothes back on and walked outta there!

"You know," she continues, pouring herself a glass of white wine, " . . . when I first started doin' the show I didn't even have an unlisted phone number, just this answering machine. Then one night I went home and played back my messages, and there was this one message . . ." Gilda changes into an excited woman's voice, ". . . 'Oh my God . . . I don't *believe* it! . . . Is this? No, it couldn't be . . . I meant to dial—is that *you* Gilda?' . . ."

Gilda is off and running now, pacing back and forth in the small dressing room, tossing out stories with the alacrity of a blackjack dealer. Everything reminds her of a story . . . so . . . when I go to the bathroom to fill a cup of water and the faucet makes this awful OOO-GAH! noise . . .

"God! The plumbing in this place! . . . Y'know, one time I was in make-up or gettin' my hair done or somethin' and all the toilets in the *building* backed up . . . And I was sitting there watching the shit roll by, and ya know what worried me? I have thrown up in every toilet in Rockefeller Center, and I was terrified that any minute I'd see my own vomit go rolling by . . . And everyone would know it was mine 'cause there'd be like a little piece of a donut . . ."

Suddenly a voice over the PA system calls Gilda back to the studio. We start walking down the hall, and Gilda puts her arm around my shoulder. "Don't worry," she says, as much to herself as to me, ". . . it's gonna be all right."

One of the first things you notice sitting around the studio is that most of the crew wear these loose khaki shirts with the *Saturday Night* logo embroidered in script across the back; and most of the women who work on the show have frizzed-out hair—different variations on the basic Cinandre theme—and wear either baggy pants and forties print shirts, or Deco dresses, or tight rolled-up jeans and tiny tube tops and high high heels.

Gilda has frizzed-out hair—it starts behind two barrettes at her temples and explodes into a wild disarray of sleek wiry fuzz down to her shoulders—and she wears high high heels and tiny tube tops and rolled up jeans, except, more often than not . . . her fly's unzipped. Vulnerable, klutzy.

By the same token, Gilda's moments on the show are little air pockets of reality amidst the turbulence of formula genius. Gilda has moved into the vacuum created by Chevy Chase's departure in that she is the only performer, in a troupe of accomplished actors, who remains *herself* no matter what character she is doing, and is not afraid to use herself when all else fails. Gilda is *out* there. Unlike Chevy, however, Gilda is still a fan. When Lily Tomlin hosted the show for the first time, Gilda was so nervous ("I had jelly legs, it was like having a crush on a guy . . .") that she forgot all her lines in the scene they did together. The first day that Candy Bergen came to rehearse, Gilda changed her clothes "about eight thousand times" before she left her house for work.

"I didn't know," she says, "if I wanted to, like, *compete* with her or just go for the ugliest thing I had, come as a guy or, like, a janitor. I ended up, after trying everything on, going with something I thought was just work clothes, y'know? *No* statement at all. I wanted to come in, like, blank . . ."

The first day Candy Bergen came to rehearse, Gilda changed her clothes "about eight thousand times" before she left her house for work

"Like a parentheses?"

"Right. Parentheses dressing. And I ended up finding out that she was someone I could *tell* all these things to, all these fears I had . . . And she just laughed."

Gilda ended up going on the show, flattering Bergen to death, then telling her that she wished she (Bergen) had something hanging out of her nose! Perfect. How many women must look at Candy Bergen and figure they might as well dress in drag? Better still, how many secretly pray for her to go on TV with a big booger hanging out. It's the same principle as the Mona Lisa's mustache.

According to Gilda, part of Lorne Michaels' genius is that he *uses* what's happening to the cast emotionally that week in the show. One week Gilda went into his office crying because nothing much had been written for her. She asked him if she couldn't *please* do the opening of the show, and he said, "Okay, but how will that be funny?" So Gilda spent a half hour before airtime pacing up and down, getting good and pissed off, until she could come out and say: "I was supposed to be Patty Hearst in a scene, and I was supposed to be Joey Heatherton in the Vikings' locker room . . . and I'm *not* in it . . . so . . . Mom, go to bed!"

Then there was the time that Elliott Gould hosted the show. The week before Gilda had been making a nuisance of herself, running in and out of Michaels' office complaining that she never met any new guys and she hated New York and wanted to go home. So when Gould goes on the show that Saturday night—a nice Jewish guy, right?—Michaels has Gilda come out and act like they slept together the night before, gets her to follow Gould around saying things like: "I had a really great time last night and I was wonderin' if you were gonna phone me again."

Cut to *Saturday Night*, live. Gilda is playing one of her more devastating characters, Rhonda Weiss. Rhonda is a Long Island Jewish princess, the kind of girl who has her period all month. Tonight Rhonda is having an engagement party, and all her girlfriends are there, and she's opening all these really duddy gifts like egg slicers and melon ballers, and she's oohing and ahing over each one—"I don't know what it is, but I'm sure I'll love it"—until the end of the sketch when she says, "And I hope each one of you will meet a nice criminal lawyer named Barry Liebowitz."

Three days later Gilda will receive a letter from a Brooklyn attorney named . . . Barry Liebowitz.

Gilda gets lots of letters. Seventeen-year-old boys send her their picture and tell her they want to lose their virginity to her. Hardly an Earth Mother, she seems, somehow, accessible. She gets letters from fourteen-year-old girls who know that she, too, is going through a protracted adolescence.

Part of Gilda's appeal, indeed, part of *Saturday Night*'s appeal, is tied into the ascendance of the ethnic hero. There's a lot of Rhonda Weiss in Gilda, and look at Belushi, an Albanian Brando! But if Gilda is as much of a sweetie as Brenda or Rhoda, she's a sweetie with a cutting edge, a bitchiness beneath the surface. Her psyche is more closely aligned with the formerly-fat Jewish girl who writes a steamy best-seller and fantasizes about stardom and zipless fucks than the formerly fat Jewish girl who be-

PHOTOGRAPHS BY LANE BERKWIT

PHOTOGRAPH BY EDIE BASKIN

A Star is Born? After *Saturday Night*'s last show, the cast was feted at Elaine's. Gilda (top center) found herself surrounded by (clockwise): Mick Jagger, Buck Henry, Mikhail Baryshnikov, Milos Forman, fellow crazy John Belushi, Warren Beatty and Elliott Gould

comes a stand-up comic and makes jokes like, "If my thighs were any bigger they'd qualify for statehood."

Gilda is as sharp as Streisand and as fey as Dylan. Her self-images overlap, become synergistic. She's no goody two-shoes playing bad, or a bad girl playing good. She's a nice Jewish girl whose greatest fantasy is to be a rock star. She's Baba Wawa and a Video Vixen. She's a cuddly little kid and a growing-up Lolita. She is, as Anne Beatts pointed out, fun to hug because she's so fragile and so brittle at the same time.

The last show of the season is over. We are at Elaine's at a big private party, and Gilda's being bussed on the cheek by a dark-haired guy in aviator shades and a swinging singles' body shirt and pursued by another guy with thinning hair in an Eisenhower golf jacket. They're just like the guys who write to her and stop her on the street to tell her they love her or send her stuffed racoons, except . . . the guy in the aviator shades is Warren Beatty, and the other guy, in the golf jacket, is director Milos Forman.

There's a big table in the middle of the room, and sitting at it are Mick Jagger and Mikhail Baryshnikov. Elliott Gould is down in back. Jack Nicholson's there, as are a handful of high-fashion models and a gaggle of comedy groupies, all of whom know that, for some mysterious reason, *Saturday Night* is the hottest thing on TV, and whether or not it's really any good doesn't matter: this is where the energy is. Gilda is wearing white pleated pants and a white tube top, and she flutters around the room like a moth attracted to its own incandescence.

So, this is what it's like living out your adolescence via the regenerative powers of the tube. A far cry from some upper-middle-class suburb of Detroit.

The Midwest may well be the cradle of our pop mythology, birthplace of James Dean and Marlon Brando, Lily Tomlin and John Belushi, F. Scott Fitzgerald, the automobile. . . . The ice cream cone, it is generally agreed upon,

made its first appearance at the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904. And from Chicago, once a month, issues forth the far-sighted vision of Hugh Hefner's fevered imagination, the libidinous girl-next-door.

Appropriately, Gilda Radner grew up in an upper-middle-class suburb of Detroit where her best girlfriend's father was an executive at General Motors and where she and her buddy used to entertain themselves test-driving the new cars up and down Woodward Avenue. One of the most important people in Gilda's young life was the woman who took care of her, a farm woman she nicknamed Dibby, the inspiration for Emily Litella, S/N's Mrs. Malaprop. The other important person was her father, a street-smart businessman who died when she was fourteen. Like so many women who seem able to shift effortlessly into overdrive, Gilda was a Daddy's girl.

"My Dad was real funny," Gilda says. We are at the Spring Street bar, eating again, and she pauses a moment to pop a gold inlay out of her mouth and tuck it beneath the cellophane of her cigarette pack. "He was in real estate and investments, but he loved show biz. He loved to sing . . . and he could tap dance . . . and he couldn't carry a tray of food to the table without tripping to make us kids laugh and make my mother nervous . . . If he coulda lived another life, another dream, he would have been in show biz . . .

"Just recently, in this last year or two of my life with *Saturday Night*, and in the last four years that I've been performing, I feel that some part of my father is back alive in me, back doing what he always wanted to do. I never use the word *karma* or stuff like that, but I know he's here, I feel him . . ."

A waiter hovers around the table.

"I want some more wine," Gilda says.

"Will you let me buy you a glass?" the waiter says. "I'm a big fan of yours."

"Oh, sure," Gilda smiles at him, then adds ingenuously, "And for my friend, Tracy? Will you buy her another beer too?"

"Of course."

"You know what?" Gilda seems on the verge of tears again. "I'm gonna start to cry because people give me stuff all the time. People give me . . . . ice cream. It's like my Dad is alive again. Needless to say it's the most painful thing in my life that . . . uh, thank you . . . that I lost him, but for some reason, God or whatever has chosen to give him back to me through this career. Uh . . . I used to come downstairs in my house and say to him, 'I need a new dress for my doll, Dad,' and he'd go out in the *rain* to get me the Barbie tennis outfit, you know?" She laughs.

". . . Just like the waiter right now, like he's back here in all these people. It's like him sittin' on my bed at night tellin' me that he loves me . . . He used to call me his heart, that was his name for me. And maybe that's why when you say 'America's Sweetheart' I respond, and maybe that's why I am so tense with you 'cause I thought, 'How will I make Tracy *see* that? That *that's* what's happening . . . 'Cause ultimately everything comes down to a real personal level . . .'"

One of the post-Movement clichés is that women were never supposed to be funny, that the only women who were funny were the social pariahs. Gilda, however, went to an all-girls' day school where you were rewarded for being funny, or being good at sports or good at school, rather than for your popularity with boys.

"I loved it," she says. "It's only recently that I've discovered that it's because of all those years that I'm not a feminist. That's why I get real impatient with women who go on about it. Like, I've had people come to interview me who say . . ." Gilda assumes a mock serioso vioce, ". . . 'Do you think comedy's changing for women today?' . . . I've always been funny, y'know? And I'll continue to be. I think if suddenly I became a hard-core feminist it'd be, like, it'd be *over*."

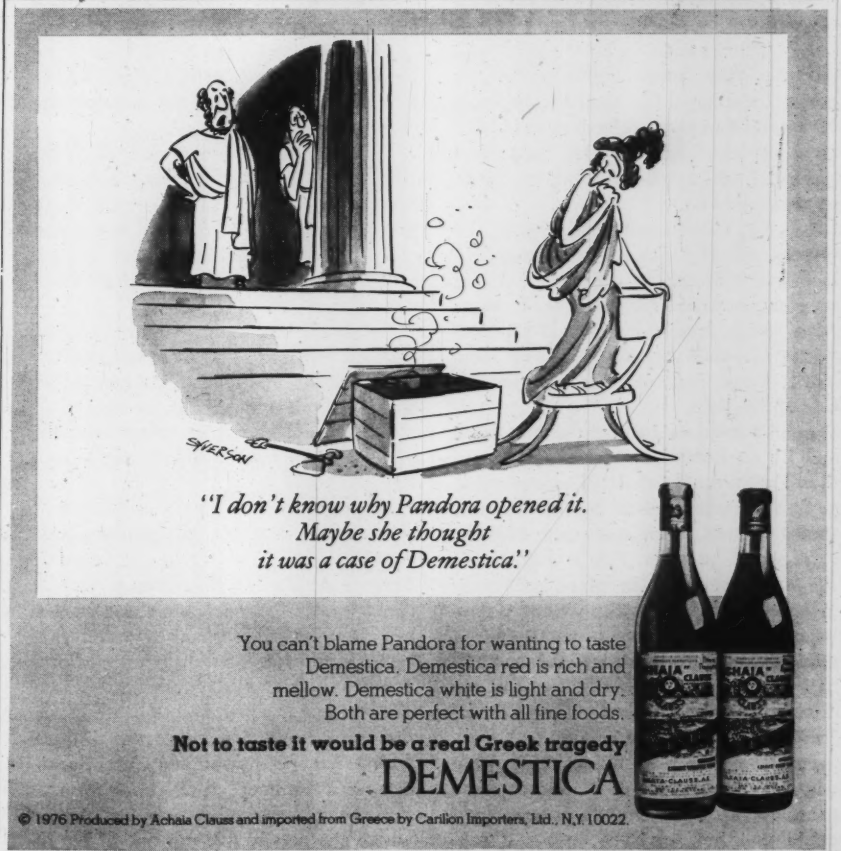
"There's something I have to tell you," I say.

"Huh?"

"That's Betty Freidan over there at that table."

"She sure is . . . What's she eating? You wanna go talk to her? . . . I read *The Feminine Mystique* and thought it was the most *boring*—if I have a little more wine I may just go tell her . . ."

"Anyway," Gilda continues, "one year I went to a co-ed school 'cause I wanted to see what guys were like . . . and I ended up back at the girls' school . . . I did this one thing, though. When I was 14 and at camp I made this pact with God and said, 'If I'm really nice and do a good deed for someone every day, will you *please* let me have a boyfriend?' . . . Well, I was the nicest girl at camp. *They* didn't know I'd made a pact with God for a boyfriend, they just thought," Gilda laughs, " . . . 'Hey, 'need someone to make your bed? Ask Gilda, she'll do anything.



"I don't know why Pandora opened it. Maybe she thought it was a case of Demestica."

You can't blame Pandora for wanting to taste Demestica. Demestica red is rich and mellow. Demestica white is light and dry. Both are perfect with all fine foods.

Not to taste it would be a real Greek tragedy

DEMESTICA

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Need someone to sweep, iron your clothes? Whatever you want' . . .

". . . Then we went on a hayride and this guy started to talk to me! He ended up being my boyfriend at camp. It worked! . . . And it took about a week before this guy started to make me *sick*. So I ended up leaving camp with no boyfriend but everybody sayin', 'Boy, Gilda sure is a nice girl!' . . . So now I'm goin' through my boy-crazy stage that I missed out on then . . ."

Something outside the window catches Gilda's eye: "See?"

"What?" I can't see anything out there except an empty street.

"Watch what's happening outside the window. People are waving at me, watch! They keep coming back . . . Oh, I made it up—no! Look! He keeps coming back . . . Oh, now it won't happen . . . Okay, never mind," she says, nervously reverting to *shtick*.

After high school Gilda spent six years at the University of Michigan and never graduated because she refused to let the curriculum interfere with her Life. Around 1969-70 Gilda moved to Canada with a sculptor boyfriend, tried, for a year and a half, to be the perfect "artist's wife," and succeeded, mainly, in acquiring a host of psychosomatic diseases which mushroomed into fantasies of imminent nuclear attack.

"Every time a plane went over I thought they were gonna drop the bomb," she says. "I wanted to get cans of soup and go in the basement . . . My creativity was being so submerged that I thought I was dyin', but I didn't want to go alone, you know?"

So Gilda went back into the theatre, taking a turn at The Second City in Toronto (jumping off place, at one time or another, for Nichols & May, Alan Arkin, John Belushi) and *The National Lampoon Radio Show* in New York, where she was the only girl in a cast of five guys.

"I used to go to these meetings, and I'd sit there and be real quiet, and then I'd think, 'I wonder if any of these guys are interested in me?' . . . And then I'd think, 'This is a waste of time, I'm gonna pretend I'm a guy now.' . . . So I'd start eatin' pizza and drinkin' beer till I was sick, y'know? And when we had comedy discussions I couldn't get a word in edgewise, so finally I said, 'Let me type' . . . And my ideas would get in there because I'd *type* 'em in while they were talking . . .

"I believe in doing things that way, but Valri Bromfield used to tease me about it . . . Valri? She's a genius! I could call her up right now and say, 'Tracy's here and she wants to talk to her parents,' and she could *do* your parents . . . Anyway, she'd say to me, 'Gilda, you're such a milquetoast, you're not gonna get anywhere!'. . . "

From the *Radio Show* it was but a quantum leap to instant stardom at *Saturday Night*. The rest is history. Or maybe a soap opera; Gilda's fans have followed her progress as avidly as any soap, writing her letters telling her not to put herself down in interviews, watching her metamorphosize from a pudgy *schlepper* into . . . America's sweetheart, thrilled at the sight of an erstwhile loser turning into a big winner. The Rocky syndrome. And Gilda, in the true tabloid spirit, attributes it all to the fact that she lost weight.

"Last summer I was sick," she says, "and I lost eight pounds. I lost it and then I . . . uh . . . "

"How *did* you lose so much weight, Gilda?" I can't help thinking about her throwing up in all those johns.

"Never mind. Stay *off* that topic. No diet tips for the readers. I just don't want to be fat ever again in my life . . . Not being fat has changed my comedy too, you know? I have to find new ways to be funny. I'd like to do a character that's a model, like the Model School of Acting. It's all done with your hair, you know?"

Gilda demonstrates by swishing her hair back and forth in front of her face and craning her neck and looking extremely vacuous.

". . . And I wanna come out with my own scent, like my own perfume . . . Gilda! . . . And maybe it's just perspiration, y'know? And instead of saying, 'Is it *you*?' . . . You *know* it is! I mean go out with that kind of confidence."

Gilda has a thing about models, and last February she lived out another fantasy by turning up as the cover girl on *Rags*, an underground fashion mag.

"Doin' the *Rags* thing was real important for me because I sure wasn't Emily Litella . . . It was me saying, 'Here's my new body that I got, that I *worked* on' . . . I'm willing to say that I could come back next year and never do Emily again, never do Barbara Walters again . . . If I could somehow stretch myself to find other things to do . . . "

Gilda has already been in *Earth Moves*, an original story written by Jane Wagner that is scheduled to be aired this fall on PBS; this summer she worked with William Atherton and Chris Sarandon in a summer stock production of *Broadway*, playing a serious role in which she gets to live out one of her father's fantasies and tap dance . . .

Okay, so maybe it's not exactly a soap opera, but something interesting is happening: when we get up to leave the restaurant and start walking outside, I notice that I'm taking these little teeny tiny mincing high-heeled steps. Some people have an infectious giggle; Gilda has an infectious walk.

Gilda arrives at my apartment for our last session almost two hours late. I'm not surprised. All along she's been resistant to this project, and for sound reasons. Ours is a vampire culture. Im-

PHOTOGRAPH BY EDIE BASKIN

ages seen through our peculiar tunnelvision are wantonly created and destroyed. While a TV show like *Saturday Night* blithely dissects and feeds off the medium itself, magazines in turn take clichés, recycle them, turn them into metaclichés: Robert DeNiro becomes the Brando of the seventies; Keith Jarrett the Nureyev of jazz, etc.

Andy Warhol said we'd all be famous for fifteen minutes, but who in their right mind would allow themself to be docilely lead off to the media grist mill? Not Gilda, she's too damn smart. And although she's been interviewed before, she makes it perfectly clear that it was all a lot of one-dimensional crap.

By the same token, Gilda can be as deadly earnest about her 'real' self as any adolescent. Maybe it's just jet lag, things happening too fast, but locking horns with her can quickly degenerate into the kind of casual therapy that emphasizes eye contact. Nevertheless this will be the last time, so it is the first time we're comfortable with each other, feeling the way I imagine couples feel who've just signed their divorce papers.

Gilda has just returned from a tap

American Sweethearts: Gilda's specialties on *Saturday Night* have included Baba Wawa (Barbara Walters, top); Lucille Ball (below); and Nora Ephron (small photo, left). Still, Gilda *always* plays herself

lesson so she goes to the bathroom to wash up. When she somes out, here's what happens: I have an Abyssinian cat, and the cat has a rabbit's foot toy that is the same color as her fur and that is lying on the floor in front of the bathroom. When Gilda reemerges she steps right on this rabbit's foot.

"Oh *no* !" She puts her hand over her mouth and looks panic-striken.

"What happened?"

"Uh . . . I . . . uh . . . stepped on your cat's tail and it came *off*," she nudges the rabbit's foot with the toe of her espadrille.

Judy Garland has become Lucille Ball again.

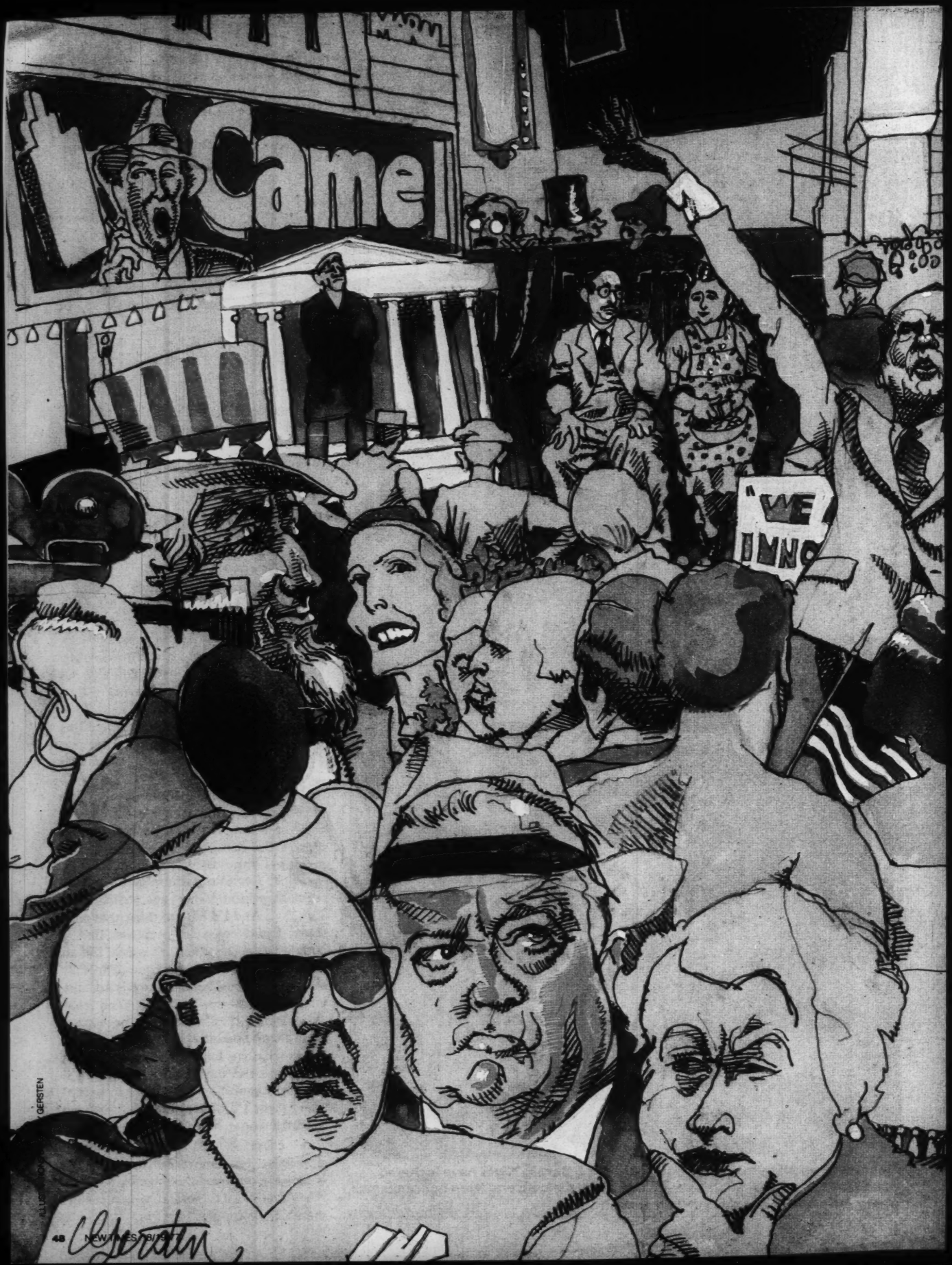
"It's strange," she says, picking at her chicken salad, food having reminded her that she's Gilda. "I have a lot of trouble sleeping at night . . . I *do*. Because I'm going through my adolescence again and suddenly it's a little like I'm the Prom Queen I never was before . . . But I can't deny that I'm thirty years old, so I'm watching what's happening as well . . .

"I worry about this whole thing, like, 'America's Sweetheart' y'know? I'm *flattered* by it—somedays I think that's what the truth is. But I wouldn't necessarily want to live it through . . . Like the other day I was walking down the street with my boyfriend and this girl yelled at me, she said, 'Hey! Gilda! What are you doin' out on the street with a guy? Like a regular person' . . . That same day I went to a restaurant and this whole bunch of kids said, 'What are *you* doing in here?' and I said, 'I came to *eat*!' . . .

"You know, people used to ask me about two years ago, 'What if you become a star?' . . . And I'd say I'll never be a star because I have no mystique about me . . .

" I seriously think that I'm this regular person who got to be on TV . . . And I'd hate to think that anything I did was so precious that I couldn't do it while I was . . . uh . . . buying a pair of shoes. The first step in stopping being funny is to take yourself too seriously. I fear that . . . But I feel fortunate because I seem to get humbled all the time. I don't know whether I create it or what, but just when I'm thinkin' I'm hot shit I'll step in dog shit . . . or I'll trip gettin' up . . . or I'll notice that my fly's been open the whole time . . .

"But . . . " Gilda continues, sipping her tea, unaware that the bag tag is hanging out over the edge of the cup, " . . . at least I *notice*, which means there's hope for me."●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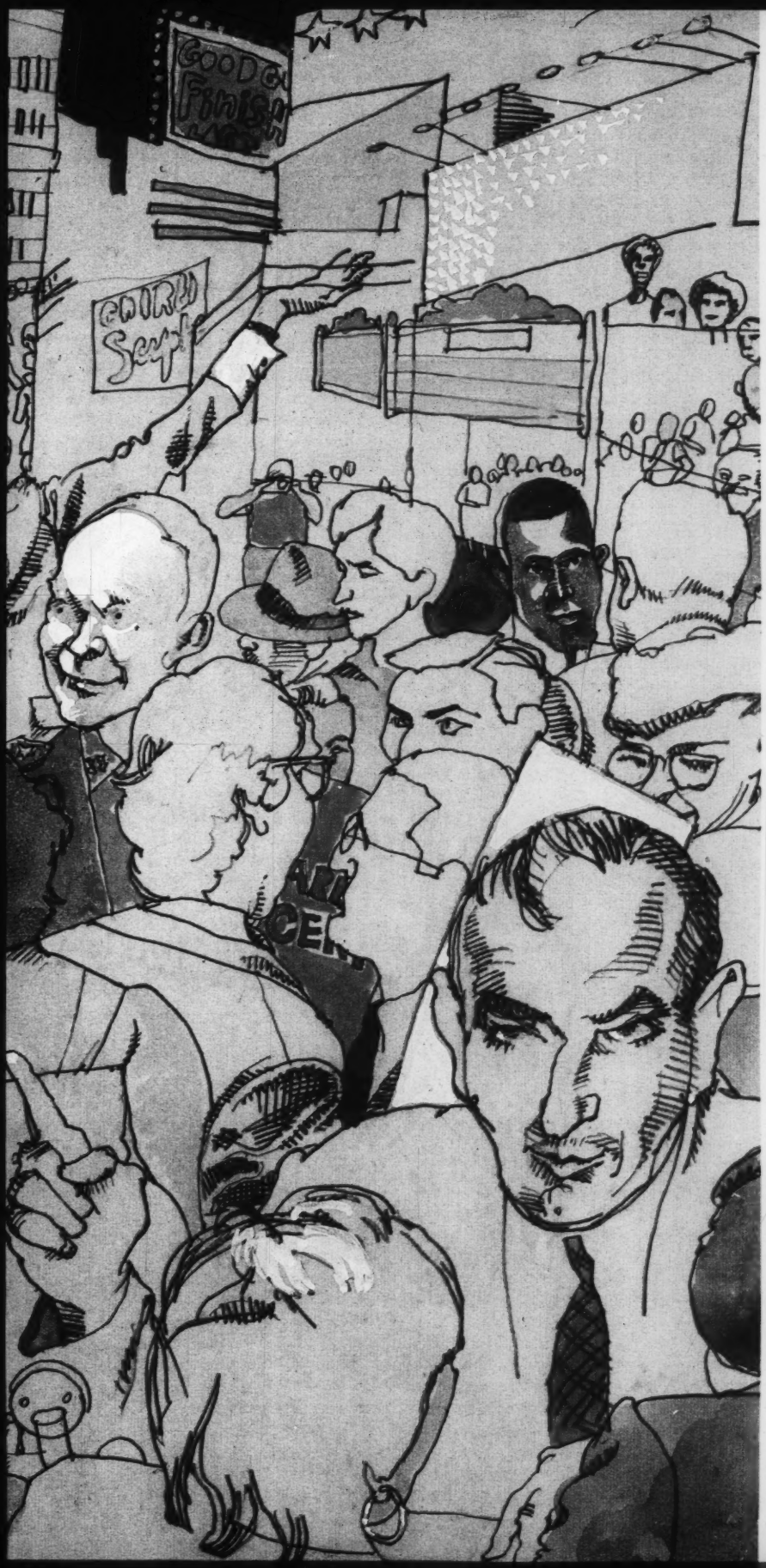

In which diverse players from the 50s—Richard Nixon, Ike, the Rosenbergs, the Marx Brothers, J. Edgar Hoover—come together once again to create a mischievous, even scandalous, national mythology **By Geoffrey Wolff**

AN AMERICAN EPIC

A few years ago, at about the time Alexander Solzhenitsyn was expelled from the Soviet Union and Norman Mailer was earning a bundle from his pictorial biography of Marilyn Monroe, a cruel piece appeared on the Op-Ed page of the *New York Times*. The essay was monstrously unfair: it alternated quotations from press conferences given by Solzhenitsyn and Mailer, the former telling reporters in Switzerland what is was like to live in a concentration camp and to be tormented for writing what he believed and to be forced from his homeland, the latter telling about the rigors of multiple alimony obligations, and the difficulty if not impossibility of making do on a quarter of a million a year.

I can't recollect who it was who thus mugged Mailer, and I'm not certain that Mailer referred to the Big One, the killer novel he has for two decades promised to hit us all with. But the effect of the piece was to remind readers how crucially consequence depends upon resistance. I am not suggesting that Solzhenitsyn is lucky to have suffered more than Mailer, but that a kind of majesty is the product of personal heroism in combination with uncommon gifts of imagination.

Sentence for sentence, I can think of at least half a dozen American writers who surpass Solzhenitsyn in power of fancy and grace of language, and Mailer is one of them. Moreover, Mailer tempts his fellow citizens to resist him. He badgers them, affronts them, outrages them. No matter: by now everyone loves him. He's no outcast, he's a talk-show celebrity. So he retreats into his work, resolves to disappear for a time. So people forget him.

The games, artifice, formal self-awareness and mischief that have been the fictional enterprises of such fabulists as William H. Gass, Stanley Elkin, Donald Barthelme, Vladimir Nabokov and

Robert Coover are of the greatest aesthetic seriousness. But none of these writers would argue that his work has even slight remedial or proscriptive bearing upon American life. It is especially difficult to write in a free and bountiful country the kind of Big Novel that the *First Circle* is, or *The Cancer Ward*.

But one of these writers has now, most improbably and entirely by indirection, written what I would never have believed could again be written: a Great American Novel. Robert Coover's huge book, *The Public Burning* (Viking: $12.95), qualifies in every way for this perhaps vulgar rubric: it was written at great personal cost during ten years; it is accessible to some important degree by everyone who can read American prose; it exploits historical data from a period just now passing from immediate memory—the cold war—to postulate a comical and awful mythology about the nature of celebration, institutionalism, community, love, ambition, pain and energy in American life. It has, that is, depth and breadth, and it simply bowls me over.

Once and more happily titled *The Public Burning of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg: An Historical Romance*, it builds toward the night of June 19, 1953, in Times Square. Then and there the Atom Spies are electrocuted in the presence of the American people assembled en masse, drunk and horny, witnesses to Richard Nixon calling upon them for sacrifice with his britches tangled around his ankles.

The book's effect—but not its manner—is anarchic, subversive of public order and decency; it libels half the country and will scandalize the rest. Uncle Sam spanks Justice William O. Douglas in Times Square, before our assembled folk, for delaying the Rosenberg executions. America beholds this drunk and sweaty, citizens feeling one another up while Milton Berle and Amos 'n Andy and Betty Crocker and Jimmy Durante and Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers and Abbott and Costello and Ozzie and Harriet work up entertainments to warm up the public burning, which will itself be followed by a Bobo Olsen vs. Paddy Young title match. Recording it all as Harry James plays from the Astor Roof is *Time*, the National Poet Laureate, whose gassy rhetoric and sense of destiny resemble America's own. If *Time* "bursts through the scrim of phenomena and grasps the whole of tonight's events, he will celebrate them; if they overwhelm him, he will belittle them. He's a professional, after all."

Time doesn't always scruple to pin events precisely, trusting "fakery in allegiance to the truth." Just so Coover: if Ike is accurately enough represented as a killer who can shut the switches on the Rosenbergs and then "go out and swat a few," wearing his goofy monkey's grin, it is entirely less probable that on Ethel Rosenberg's last night on earth she and Dick Nixon tenderly manipulated each others private parts. And I refuse to believe that Uncle Sam Slick, choosing Nixon to be his incarnation as President, places upon that poor fellow his imprimatur by—how shall I put this?—well, by backpacking him, and this deep within the belly of the Walt Disney whale that took a taste of Geppetto.

The febrile story is told in 28 sections bearing such titles as "A Rash of Evil Doings" and "Iron Butt Gets Smeared Again" and "Yippee, the Divine Concursus" and "A Taste of the City" (wherein Nixon and Ethel Rosenberg, topping each other with the miseries they have suffered—unhappy childhoods, backaches and hay fever—and weeping upon each other, fall in love) and "Freedom's Holy Light," the public burning itself. These sections are narrated alternately by Coover (in many disguises) and by Dick Nixon, the Fighting Quaker. There are as well three intermezzi, one of them a dramatic dialogue between Ethel Rosenberg and Dwight Eisenhower, both of them once, like Nixon, stage-struck, and another a last-act Sing Sing opera by Mr. and Mrs. Rosenberg. The design is fastidious but the material, like the language, is extreme, hanging right out at the far edge of possibility. A prologue and epilogue extend the action beyond the night of the execution, and the two days and nights that precede it, folding in events from the two years that pass from the time the Rosenbergs are condemned to death until shortly after they are dead.

In fact, in real time, the execution was traumatic, and not only for the Rosenbergs. Grand and grubby metaphors clustered around the issue of their crime and their punishment. Rhetoric fell like hail, and thickened like molasses. The judge at their trial considered the Rosenberg's crime "worse than murder." He delivered himself of the judgment that their putative mischief caused "the Communist aggression in Korea, with the resultant casualties exceeding fifty thousand and who knows but that millions more of innocent people may pay the price of your treason?" Calculated political use was made of the disappointed engineer with a radio repair shop and a prissy mustache, as it was made of his wife, a would-be singer and actress. But, as Coover apprehends, their pathetic figures stood at the dead eye of an authentic storm, a time of black magic and primitive commotion, a conflict between ourselves and Russia that metastasized into a self-styled Armageddon, pitting Light against Dark, Uncle Sam against The Phantom.

The period was consequential. Sonorities have been uttered about it. More sonorities will be gravely uttered, using as an occasion the publication of *The Public Burning*. But Coover has no literary interest in redressing injustices, or cautioning against their repetition. Rather he taps a time of ungoverned energy, takes the spark from Yucca Flats and carries it through space and down time, and here it is.

It almost wasn't. Before *The Public Burning* found its way to Richard Seaver, Coover's editor at Viking Press, the novel passed through four publishers dying to profit from its prestige and marketability but finally terrified of its many sharp and conspicuous thorns. There were many months, and even years, during the making of this novel, when Coover was given reason to believe it would never be published. Or that he would have to publish it himself. Or photocopy the type script and mail it to a dozen friends. Such suspense is painful enough to anyone whose book might be institutionally ignored. But for a man who has spent his best years, and written his best, and knows this, it must have been an awful torment. *The Public Burning* was not written to win the affection of publishers' lawyers: many of its characters are alive, and most of these might confidently be expected to know how to find a libel lawyer, who might in turn know his apples about invasion of privacy, slander, violation of common law copyright . . . Public people in their public performances are all but libel-proof. But what of public people in their private lives? One of the tests of libel—and there is a thing known as criminal libel, a thing with teeth—is that it has been written in reckless disregard of the truth. What Coover has written, an historical romance in the sense that Hawthorne used *romance*, an emission of fancy, is by calculation written in disregard of the truth. But what of the historical part, the correspondence between a fictional character named Richard Nixon and a man, with a capacity to suffer hurt, who lives exiled in San Clemente?

Coover believes, and for what it's worth I entirely agree, that a work of imagination, a romance (historical or otherwise), is absolutely privileged. If

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the matter must be put to test, it could not be put to test more seriously than with *The Public Burning*, but no one friendly to Coover or his book could wish such an outcome to his labor, and no one could with any confidence prophesy what its end would be. Serious and intelligent people believe that such a use of living characters as Coover has made is an evil work. I confess that I am puzzled by those who wish Coover had shifted a few letters in Dick Nixon's name, had called him Nick Doxin, say, to escape the noose. What we have here is the manipulation of a received mythology, whose tablets are *Six Crises* and the prison letters of the Rosenbergs, to create a rival mythology. It is not imagined that a reader will understand Coover's version to be factual, merely to be true.

Coover is not unmindful of the consequences of his creative acts; how, after the many and abrupt reversals of fortune suffered by *The Public Burning*, could he be? How, as a private man who jealously guards his address in England, could he be? But beyond this he is obsessed with the power of words, their gravity: "It's an ancient maxim of the tribe: If you violate the name, you violate the man. Even if he is dead. In the old days, before the *New York Times*, if you wished to destroy a man, you inscribed his name on a pot and smashed it. Or stuck a clay image with a pin. Now you attach his name to a sin and print it. Such an act is beyond mere insult or information, it is a magical disturbance of History. It is a holy act and an act of defilement at the same time. It may bring peace and prosperity, it may result in madness and disaster." In short, this man knows what he has done, knows that he has poked some furious devils with a very short stick.

Coover's Nixon is a miserable man and a full, wonderful character. For the matter of that, he also bears the closest likeness to his substantial counterpart that anyone is apt to create. Coover spent years investigating the childhood and early manhood of the Trick, and from this labor has developed a serial revelation that far transcends the inferential lurches of such psycho-histories as David Abrahamsen's *Nixon vs. Nixon* and Bruce Mazlish's *In Search of Nixon*.

Coover's Nixon, given liberty in this very long fiction to prospect his own veins, moves on a short temperamental leash between self-pity and self-aggrandizement. "I felt cheated. I'd been studying all my life, and I still wasn't there." Always in over his head, even as the president's gofer: Ike "always gazed at me as though he saw shit on my face." "People misunderstand me." Coover's Nixon commits dislocations of priority and proportion that display an imagination for grandeur in terminal conflict with the quotidian: "There's a popular tendency to ridicule my tastes and call me square, but history will show I was one of the few Americans of my time who really knew how to eat."

Lord, he hungers for a taste of the real McCoy, to be touched by the magic of Uncle Sam and be translated into his incarnation: "If I were rich, the only thing I could possibly want to buy would be the Presidency." But like Ike, Uncle Sam is not pleased by his boy. They play golf at Burning Tree, Sam in his plug hat "freshly shazammed out of the fretful old General," and nothing goes right.

Robert Coover: "You make a million or you don't even get printed"

Nixon slices his shots, steps on his tee, confesses to ignorance about the Atom Spies Case. Sam Slick, the resolute enemy of the Phantom and his communist evil, makes manifest his displeasure, and Iron Butt sets to with a will, boning up. And can't get his mind's eye off the bare bottom of Ethel Rosenberg. So Uncle Sam pops through an open window and catches him with it in his hand: "Well, I see that the old flagpole still stands . . . "

So unfair. "Why was I always the whipping boy?" Who always whipped his mom's mashed potatoes lumpless, who did thorough work, not like his brothers. Humiliated and nagged at by Pat, who laughed at him when he proposed and obliged him to drive her to her dates with other men. "I'd suffered it all: the unwanted child, the unwanted boyfriend, the unwanted husband, the unwanted lawyer, the unwanted Vice Presidential candidate, the unwanted Republican leader—and now the unwanted Incarnation!"

On the other hand, Coover's Nixon reflects that had he devoted sufficient time to it he could have been "an important philosopher" or a "great jazz pianist" or a Communist, "and changed the course of history, I was pissed off enough" after a Wall Street law firm refused him a position. In his fancy he is "a lot like Lincoln, I guess, who was kind and compassionate on the one hand, and strong and competitive on the other."

The effect is of course comical, as a series of misbegotten disguises displayed by a clown is comical. Clowns tug at the heart, too, and so here does Nixon as I never would have believed he could. My God, you even begin to hope he won't fall on his ass again. The homelier he becomes, the deeper the hook is set.

The genius of Nixon's portrait is the creation of a flat locution, almost a drone, or a whine, that nevertheless surprises with stunning turns of mood, a kind of madness plotted by Coover with pluperfect timing. The figure of Uncle Sam, on the other hand, exhibits genius at the antipodes, flat-out bluster and verbal nerve, an exhibition of frontier extravagance that again taps received legends to break open a new mythology.

Think of this Uncle Sam on stilts, but graceful, quick, bony, mean. Slick as a "snake out of black sin . . . chin-whiskered and plug-hatted and all rigged out in his . . . striped pantaloons, his pockets stuffed with pitches, patents, and pyrotechnics, burst upon the withering Old World like a Fourth of July skyrocket, snorting and neighing like a wild horse: 'Who—Whoo—*Whoop!* Who'll come gouge with me? Who'll come bite with me? Rowff-Yough — Snort — *YA-HOO!* . . . I'm in fer a fight, I'll go to my death on a fight, and with a firm reliance on the pertection of divine protestants, a fight I must have, or else I'll have to be salted down to save me from spillin'! You hear me over thar, you washed-up varmints? This is the hope of the world talkin' to you! I am Sam Slick the Yankee Peddler—I can ride on a flash of lightnin', catch a thunderbolt in my fist, swaller niggers whole, raw or cooked . . . squeeze blood out of a turnip and cold cash out of a parson, and out-inscrutabullize the heathen Chinee . . . Lo, I say unto you, I have put a crimp in a cat-a-mount with my bare hands, hugged a cinnamon b'ar to death, and made a grizzly sing 'Jesus, Love of My Soul' in a painful duet with his own

"A SEQUENCE OF CIRCUS ACTS"

Interview with Robert Coover: Warwick Hotel, New York City; December 10, 1976

Geoffrey Wolff: Here we are, appropriately enough, near Times Square, the setting for much of *The Public Burning*—though maybe "setting" is not the precise word? . . .

Robert Coover: No, more like a spiritual presence—the Great White Way. Coming here's like attending church. The American church, I mean . . .

GW: Which is synonymous, I take it, with theater, with spectacle? . . .

RC: With entertainment, yes. Showbiz. In America the search for meaning is tied up with the search for entertainment.

GW: That accounts, I suppose, for the strategy of excess I discern in the book, whereby you crank up the volume, by turns, one bit of business topping the previous . . .

RC: I don't know whether I'd call it a strategy of excess so much as the inevitability of it—in a circus, you can't let your show go flat, one act has to be topped by another. Though it's true, even though I knew where I was going, I did write this book from front to back, and did try to push each act, each chapter, as far as I could just to increase the challenge of the next one. So, in that sense, it was a strategy.

GW: Well, it's an extraordinary performance of a book. What was the germinating idea for it?

RC: At first it was just a simple theater idea. That was in 1966. A long time ago. I was teaching at a little college up the river from here, and I happened on a book about the Rosenbergs in the college library. As far as I could tell, I was the only one who'd ever checked it out. No one seemed to remember it. Collectively, I mean—it had been forgotten. A watershed event in recent American history, and we'd all repressed it. So it occured to me then to restage it—with special added attractions—in Times Square, where we could all have another look at it. That might have been a good idea, appropriate to the late sixties, but I was teaching seven courses a semester up there, first time I'd ever taught in my life, and I didn't have time to breathe, much less write. I managed a few rough scenes, fragments, but nothing whole.

GW: How did Nixon come into it?

RC: Well, I kept adding to it over the years, and eventually it developed into more of a story *about* staging the executions in Times Square than actually doing it as a theater piece itself; and I soon found myself in need of a narrator, somebody to interrupt the noisy showbiz acts with something more personal. I wanted somebody on the inside, close to the action, as it were, but not one of the principals. Nixon had always been part of the original idea, but more as a kind of Robin to Eisenhower's Batman. But then, with his election to the presidency in 1968, I knew he had to be my man.

GW: I've never read anywhere a portrait of Nixon remotely as sympathetic as yours. Whether or not it's your intention, the effect of your fiction is extraordinarily engaging: he's not only interesting, but his case is poignant in artfully complicated ways. Is this a product of your interest in him as a character in history, or a character in a fictional structure? Is your interest in Nixon, or in your Nixon?

RC: Hell, I don't know. People have taken Nixon's role so damned seriously. It's as though to pretend that we're living in a serious time—but it's all more ludicrous than that, we're all more ludicrous. Those of us who judge, as well as the man we judge. But my interest in Nixon—or my story about him—grew out of my concept of the book as a sequence of circus acts. That immediately brought to mind the notion of clown acts, bringing the show back down to the ground. You have a thrilling high-wire number, and then the clown comes on, shoots off a cannon, takes a pratfall, drops his pants and exits. And then you can throw another high-wire act at them. So naturally I looked for the clownish aspects of my narrator, and you can't have an unsympathetic clown. Part of what makes a clown act work is that you like him. But in truth, with Nixon, it didn't feel unnatural—I didn't feel like I was disguising him in any way. Something to do with his resilience, I guess—get up from each pratfall, forget it, get ready to take another. A man's worst defect usually has something to do with his best virtue.

GW: You sometimes speak of "dreamtime"—what do you mean by that?

RC: The inner truths, legends, mythos of the race, the origins, the mysterious beginnings of the tribe. A primitive idea maybe, but I feel we're dealing with a primitive society here. The point of a ceremonial return to dreamtime is basically regenerative: to recover belief in the tribe and get things moving again. The best social orders run down with time, and so occasionally you have to tear it all apart and start over. Primitive societies set aside a time each year to do this on a ritual basis. Get drunk, break all the rules, commune with the primordial chaos and the dreamtime of the civilizers, recapture the sense of community and thus of order. Anyway, good excuse for a party . . .

GW: So we're back to Times Square again, New Year's Eve . . .

RC: Yes, the sacred ground, a mass experience—and it's the role of the author, the fiction maker, the mythologizer, to be the creative spark in this process of renewal: he's the one who tears apart the old story, speaks the unspeakable, makes the ground shake, then shuffles the bits back together into a new story. Partly anarchical, in other words, partly creative—or re-creative. The organizers of society—the politicians, chiefs, bureaucrats—will go ahead and rebuild the thing from time to time; but that's not what the storytellers are doing.

GW: What has this to do with you, other than with your formal preoccupations? Do you feel a kind of priestly charge?

RC: Yes, but only ironically. Politicians are bad enough, but priests to me are the biggest comedians of all. But I do like societies that are lively rather than those that are dead, and I enjoy the fun of stirring things up, breaking the rules, punching holes in the structures so as to see through to the mysteries—even if only to rediscover what it was you liked about society when it was still all of a piece. The artist's role then is priestly in a way: he's there, at his best, as a voice of disturbance.

GW: Maybe that's why this book seems "true" to me in some important sense. It feels like an accurate representation of where and how we stood on that day, June 19, 1953. Do you care?

RC: Yes, but truth for the narrator is not the same as truth for the journalist or historian or scientist. The author is working out of a set of metaphors—even if sometimes he gives them names and calls them characters—and he first of all has to be true to them. So that in a work of fiction you can have a sense of terrible truth about a thing that doesn't seem to relate at all to the so-called real world. Normally, though, the metaphors *will* relate to the real world—language itself, after all, is a product of that world—and so the fiction will have a second standard of truth. That is, the metaphors themselves have in the first place some *need* to arise, and the word "truth" is probably as good as any to describe why this is so.

GW: Of course much of what happens in your fiction, your ceremony and performance, did not happen to the world. Richard Nixon and Ethel Rosenberg did not, as they say, "get together." Do you take liberties also with chronologies, with the bob-ends of the history you exploit?

RC: A little, not much. Like in creation myths, I sometimes transpose events for the sake of a kind of inner coherence, and there's a certain amount of condensation and so on, but mainly I accept that what I'm dealing with here is a society that is fascinated with real data, facts and figures, dates, newspaper stuff. I can't mess around too much with the data here lest I lose contact with that fascination.

GW: Yes, but take "The Groun'-Hog Hunt," for example—it's as though events, once they transpire, enter a body of legend, and are free to move through time, to cluster into narrative designs rather than chronological orders.

RC: My own inclination as a writer is to move more and more in that direction, condensing, moving facts around, juxtaposing living and dead persons, myth and history. That would seem a useful and proper way to write about the past. But in this case I am dealing so much with what is our journalistic history, and our adoration of it, that I hold pretty close to the bone of fact. Once you accept certain lurching metaphors, that is, such as that which asserts that everything happens in Times Square.

GW: I wonder if your narrator would agree with you.

RC: I don't know, I hope so. Maybe a revelation even. But he's not much of a reader. We'll probably never know. . . arsehole—*and I have not yet begun to fight!* Yippee!"

Sam Slick has twisted the British lion's tail, and made short work of the Spanish and the Mexicans and the Krauts and what-have-yous. Now he's on the case of the Koreans, themselves mere instruments of the Phantom, who never shows his face, who subverts from within, who can sometimes be discovered in the shadows behind the runic slabs of the *New York Times*, "exposing his hindend and farting damply." Sam Slick has the exact number of this "rantankerous mean shape," this quick-change artist, this miasma and ungraspable, unfathomable blight. He sends his boy J. Edgar to pull the Phantom's deputies, Julius and Ethel, like ground hogs, from their squalid holes. Is the Phantom the match of Uncle? Uncle, who "to prove he could stop time had pissed Old Faithful back down its hole?" Uncle *Sam*, goddammit! "He winks and Albert Einstein . . . comes down with the flu. He tugs at his balls and cargo transports airlift the heaviest tonnage of the year." Here comes High Noon. Here comes a ceremony, do or die, done and done. A Public Burning, a shot across the bow, a bit of divine display.

Robert Coover is about to be famous. This has for him an unlikely and unappetizing taste. Till now he has been a writer's writer, as difficult as he is good. He is 46, lives in the County of Kent in England with his Spanish wife, Pilar Sans-Mallafré, and two daughters and a son. He was born in a small Iowa town and grew up in Carbondale, Illinois, where he studied at Southern Illinois University for a couple of years and worked on his father's newspaper. He was said to have been a good boy, not at all demonic, a champ at Civics and of high rank in the Boy Scouts; it has even been rumored that at Indiana University, from which he took his B.A. in 1953, he was a cheerleader. Later he did graduate work at the University of Chicago and began to publish fictions born full-grown and intimidating, with sharp teeth.

He is precise in his speech and mannerisms, scrupulous in his judgments, an interior dweller with a healthy weakness for extroverts, a compact man and economical of gesture, whose hair is cut and combed. Thomas Mann once suggested that artists of radical imagination should dress and move in the guise of bankers. Coover favors Western string ties, and denims, but you wouldn't look twice, and that suits him fine.

He is capable of sudden and surprising gestures, made off instinct, what

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he calls "boomers." More than any writer, more than any man I have met, he is invincibly self-assured and secure in his professional self-esteem. This he expresses not through stridency or arrogance but through a relentlessness of purpose: he knows what he means to do, and does neither less nor more. He has outlined sufficient work to occupy himself for the next two hundred years; I imagine that he wants to be prepared in the event of a cure for mortality.

Paradoxically, for a man who imposes such stringencies upon himself, he is known as a remarkably generous teacher. He is so secure in his own convictions about the fit nature of work and art that he is not threatened by contrary convictions in others. He is a loyal and thoughtful friend, easy with his kids. And yet a close friend of his has mentioned the brimstone smoke of Lucifer that hangs near him, a dangerous quality that reveals itself in his affection for chaos, division, subversion and dialectical clash.

He is a deeply private man, with an abhorrence for what he calls the "entertainment industry," and this has caused him no small measure of unease as publication of *The Public Burning*, and notoriety, approach. *The Public Burning* was described a year ago in the *Washington Post* as "a great work of art, the kind of book you come across once in a lifetime." Holy smoke! The writer hadn't yet had a chance to read the thing! In commercial as well as metaphysical terms, Coover's third novel is a Big Book: a $40,000 advertising "campaign," 85,000 copies in print before publication date, a quarter-million knocked down for reprint rights. Riding the crest, his first novel, *The Origin of the Brunists*, which won the William Faulkner Award as the best first novel of 1966 and didn't earn a dime, has been sold to a paperback house for a handsome price, and is being reissued in November by Viking in hardcover.

Coover has written chapter and verse on the random character of American fortunes, but as he himself has been buffeted by considerations that must seem to bear only marginally on the quality of his work, an uncharacteristic note of rancor has overtaken him. In a preface to an anthology of short experimential fictions recently published by the Fiction Collective, Coover writes of the "dictatorship of the marketplace" and its consequence: "You make a million or you don't even get printed." And with perhaps an eye cocked at the corporation lawyers who have plagued him he writes of "the illusion of artistic freedom, constitutionally protected."

In fact, Coover's artistic freedom has been abundantly exercised, and if it has taken awhile to find an editor as spunky as Richard Seaver (a veteran of the censorship battles fought by Barney Rossett when Seaver was at Grove Press, and Henry Miller and Fanny Hill were under the gun) and a publisher like Thomas Guinzburg, willing to hazard a distinguished publishing house on behalf of a distinguished book, it has come (so far) to a happy issue.

Moreover, it is possible in this country to go your own way, write your own books and, if you are good enough, earn something toward a modest living and begin to build an audience. It is perhaps this sense of audience, a few thousand added with each book, maybe a thousand lost, that Coover has been obliged to sacrifice. He is what Bellow has called a "small audience writer" in contrast to Bellow himself, a "large audience writer." The nature of *The Public Burning*—the scandal and gossip that have preceded and will surely follow it, the illusion of its easy accessibility—has now pushed Coover off his natural range.

Coover's purpose is not to reinforce expectations, which is what a popular entertainer tries to do. Rather it is to subvert them

His work is by nature restrictive, exclusive, unyielding. He is a dazzling entertainer, mind you, and much of his material is taken from such popular pastimes as baseball and football and election-year hoopla and from fairy tales. He likes, that is, to make use of rites and assumptions shared by the tribe, much as Greek tragedians used again and again the vessels of common mythology. But Coover's purpose, like Sophocles' purpose, is not to reinforce expectations, which is what a popular entertainer tries to do. Rather it is to subvert them.

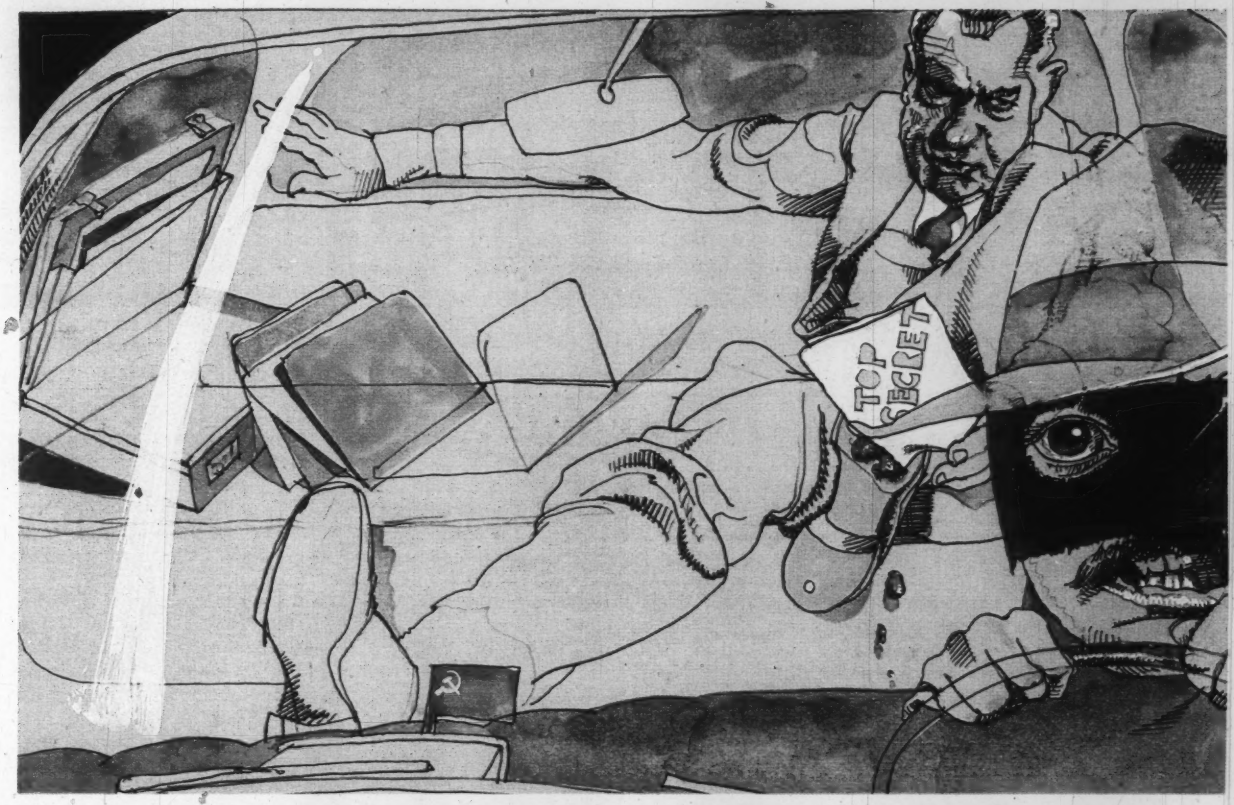
The Origin of the Brunists is about the foundation and vision of a new American religious sect that foretells the Coming of the End of the World. It is, like *The Public Burning*, extreme in its preoccupations and fully written; it is a fable of black ceremonies and magic, a liturgical invocation of the same prime chaos, violent and sexy, that Richard Nixon discovers deep in the belly of Disney's whale.

Coover's second novel was published in 1968. *The Universal Baseball Association, J. Henry Waugh, Prop.* is "about" baseball in the way that *Moby Dick* is "about" the New England whaling trade. In it a world is made up whole, a baseball league is fully populated by an accountant who controls his players' games and personal destinies by dice, as an indifferent God might be imagined to control our destinies. Here are heroes, great events and their translation into a kind of common history by the medium of journalism. The way is prepared for all of these preoccupations brought to such monumental flower in *The Public Burning*.

Meantime, there were stories and plays. *Pricksongs and Descants* (1969) is a collection of short fictions, most of which display Coover's admiration for that synthesis between "the erotic and the ludicrous, the visionary and the scatological." The book has many stories about wizards of the impossible: rabbits are pulled from hats, stories from hats, writers from hats, hats from hats. An impatient audience whistles and boos, is bedazzled, befuddled and abused. In "The Magic Poker" the author reflects upon himself as sovereign of his creation: "I wander the island, inventing it . . . At times I forget that this arrangement is my own invention. I begin to think of the island as somehow real, its objects solid and intractable." They are not, of course, and it is like Coover to demonstrate this proposition by a paragraph of destructions even more "creative" than his paragraph of creation. Here, prefiguring the destruction of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg in an act of tribal rejuvenation: "I arrange the guest cabin. I rot the porch and tatter the screen door and infest the walls. I tear out the light switches, gut the mattresses, smash the windows, and shit on the bathroom floor. I rust the pipes, kick in the papered walls, unhinge doors. Really, there's nothing to it. In fact, it's a pleasure."

Now and again the pleasure overcomes Coover's art. Rarely in his short fictions, but now and again in *The Public Burning*, he allows his mischief to beguile him, and lets a scene run too long, or become too extreme. A huge novel by any measure (well over 200,000 words), *The Public Burning* was edited down from something perhaps a third again as grand. It depends entirely for its effect on pacing, on the timing of its acts played in the three rings of Washington, New York and Sing Sing. And in its middle sections it sometimes sags, and breaks its spell.

Coover has been from time to



Phantasmagoria: Never far from Nixon, the Phantom here picks him up after an embarrassing faux pas

time seduced by movies and theater. But only fiction can satisfy the limitless play of his imagination.

In *The Public Burning* he has dared the ultimate dare: to populate a novel with an entire race, to return it to the Dark Ages, to make of a squalid national episode a "communal pageant . . . Something archetypal, tragic, exemplary."

The wonderful, awful skits, cruel beyond words, funny beyond words, are an expression of vital anarchy, as the throwing of a custard pie is an expression of vital anarchy: "Some have contended that it was America's love of pie-throwing that led the nation to develop the atomic bomb. This may or may not be true . . . " Well, in such a setting it might seem that whatever is uttered may be true, but by his formal control of episodes, his affection for syntactical order, Coover offers an ideal against which to test the random. History, and especially the history of that period, is an inventory of anarchies. Order, however, is within the artist's reach.

Or at least within *this* artist's reach. Something happens, and *then* something else. One Rosenberg is burned, and *then* another. Julius first, and then Ethel in his original title. Not *E* before *J*, or the lady before the gent. One act follows another, and this has consequence. "There are some out in the audience who have been feeling they've seen all there is to see the first time around—you just plug them in, they twitch and jerk awhile and shit their pants, then you unplug them and cart them off, ho hum . . . "

Down to earth, report-card time. Both *American Review*, in which the prologue to *The Public Burning* (titled "Groun'-Hog Hunt," wherein Uncle Sam sends J. Edgar to pull the spies from their hole) first appeared, and Viking liken it to *Ragtime*. It is not in the least like *Ragtime*. While Doctorow made his own imaginative use of the Rosenberg case in his *Play of Daniel*, *Ragtime* is a most inventive and pleasing diversion. An almost sweet musing on the question *what-if*? Both books cause historical figures to perform imaginary acts. Both books are also written in English, and sold in stores, so?

I don't know why Coover's publishers have invoked *Ragtime*, unless it is to suggest that, like it, *The Public Burning* means no harm. Now it is true enough, I believe, that Coover's novel *does* no harm. That is: it does not electrocute two Atom Spies. Nor should Pat, Tricia and Julie be led by it to believe that Ethel Rosenberg administered to Mr. Nixon moments before she was electrocuted. Nor does the book dump Uncle Sam's mightiest stuff upon the people of the Phantom. No one bleeds. This is, I guess, tautological, but people seem to forget these things. And writers like Coover mean them to forget these things. But it is useful to remember them.

I don't know where to look, beyond Coover himself, for precedents to *The Public Burning*. I would guess that since World War II only *Lolita*, *Invisible Man* and *Catch-22* are in its class for durability. But for the risks it runs, for its capacity and reach, for its literary and probable social consequence, nothing I know of written in our language since the war can touch it. I believe that many people will despise this book so deeply and publicly that we will learn again, if any of us ever knew, what exactly a novel is. I assume that the imagination carries with it certain privileges, and I think I know—having been reminded by *The Public Burning*—why. But I have not the slightest notion what value my fellow citizens place upon the imagination. Soon, believe me, we will all learn more about these matters, and so will Robert Coover. Who so far has only learned one thing, the important thing, how to make something from nothing.●

Music/By Frank Rose

The mellow sound: Radio rock goes soft

About two years ago—in June 1975, to be precise—listeners in America's number-one radio market were offered a new choice on the FM dial: the "mellow sound" of WKTU. The mellow sound was similar to the old progressive rock sound, except there wasn't any progressive rock on it—just soft rock, by the kind of performers you used to hear on progressive rock stations. It also resembled the old middle-of-the-road format, only without any of the old MOR performers—just rock stars, doing the kind of songs you used to hear on MOR stations. In short, the mellow sound of WKTU was neither rock nor middle-of-the-road—it was both.

The mellow sound—or soft rock, as it's generically known—is the newest development in youth-market FM programming. It's also the hottest. It's James Taylor and Joni Mitchell; Carly Simon and Crosby, Stills & Nash; Paul Simon and Linda Ronstadt; Jackson Browne and the Eagles; John Denver and Stevie Wonder; Barry Manilow and the easy side of the Beatles. It is the Woodstock generation slouching inevitably toward middle age, and it is the children of the seventies graduating into a laid-back lifetyle—laid-back, and upscale.

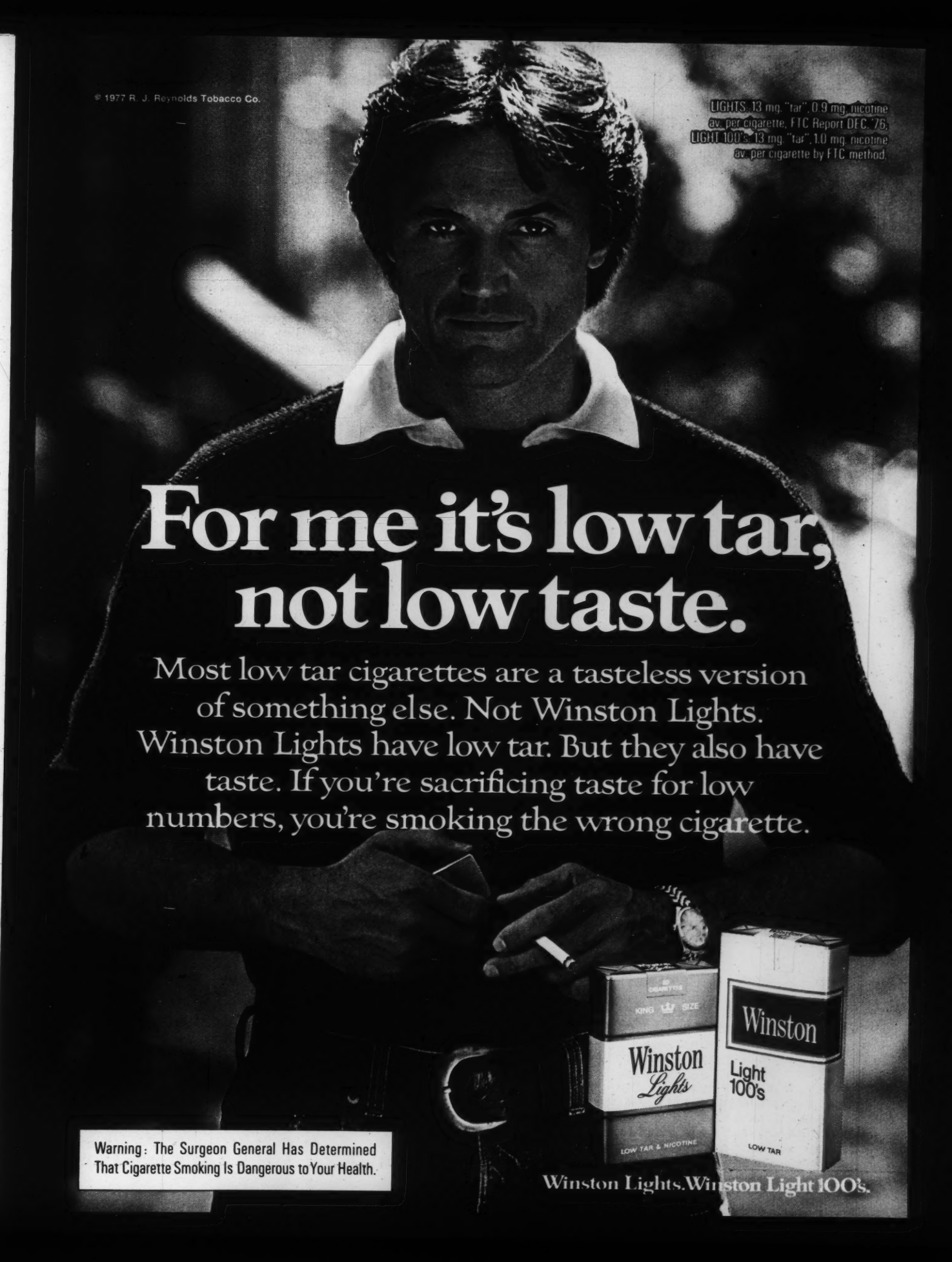
If there is going to be a sound of the seventies, mellow radio will probably define it. Large portions of the nation's young adult population—white portions, especially—already seem attuned to its mellifluous, vaguely folkie strains; now broadcasters are trying to tune in as well. Since 1975, New York's WKTU and its pioneering counterparts, KNX in Los Angeles and WMGK in Philadelphia, have been joined by similar stations in such towns as San Francisco, Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Cincinnati and Terre Haute. Lawrence Miller, the programming director at WKTU, thinks the future of mellow radio is "tremendous"; he calls it "an art form that's just coming of age." "As we get older, we mellow out," he says briskly. "It's a natural progression. And as our lifestyle changes, the music for our lifestyle changes too." WKTU ranks sixth in New York's 18–34 market, behind a disco station and two hard-rockers. But New York's soft-rock audience is still growing; in Philadelphia and L. A., the leading soft-rock stations have been number one for a year or more.

If there were a Mr. Mellow Radio, he would almost certainly be Steve Marshall. Marshall is programming director at KNX, the CBS-owned station in Los Angeles; he and his former boss, Rodger Layng, are generally credited with inventing the format. The story begins in 1971, when CBS—prompted no doubt by an FCC ruling that broadcasters couldn't air identical programming on their AM and FM stations—decided to "develop" its seven FM properties. No one knew quite what to do with them, but the KNX-FM station manager was leaning toward "beautiful music."

Beautiful music—known in the trade as "elevator music" or "slush"—is a hyper-glossy background sound dominated by string-laden instrumentals. Layng, who'd just been hired as program director, and Marshall, who'd just been hired as music director, were young men who'd worked in beautiful music formats before and were eager to try something else. They went middle-of-the-road temporarily, pending the manager's decision, but they designed their interim format as carefully as possible. They wanted it to succeed.

It did. Within six months, the manager was sufficiently impressed by the listeners Layng and Marshall had attracted (listeners were a new phe-

ILLUSTRATION BY MARQUERITA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What's mellow—and what isn't

We gave the names of some well-known rockers to the people who program KNX-FM in Los Angeles and WKTU in New York, and asked them for one song per artist that's on the soft-rock playlist and one that definitely isn't. This is what we came up with.

	Mellow	Not Mellow
Beatles	Long and Winding Road	Birthday
Rolling Stones	Angie	Jumpin' Jack Flash
Bob Dylan	Just Like a Woman	Lay Lady Lay (live version)
Neil Young	Harvest	Down by the River
Bruce Springsteen	4th of July, Asbury Pk. (Sandy)	Born to Run
Elton John	Daniel	Crocodile Rock
Peter Frampton	I'm in You	Do You Feel Like We Do
James Taylor	Handy Man	Bartender's Blues
Eagles	Peaceful Easy Feeling	James Dean
Bob Seger	Night Moves	Get Out of Denver
Fleetwood Mac	Dreams	Go Your Own Way
Jackson Browne	The Pretender	Redneck Friend
Boz Scaggs	What Can I Say	Lido Shuffle
Linda Ronstadt	You're No Good	That'll Be the Day

What, you may be wondering, is the distinction between a song like "You're No Good" and one like "That'll Be the Day"? According to KNX-FM music director Michael Sheehy, the key to the selection of soft-rock songs is the absence of "irritating factors." To Sheehy, the guitar riffs on "That'll Be the Day" are irritating, unlike those on "You're No Good."

nomenon at KNX-FM) to install their format officially. They responded by "streamlining" it—weeding out the Barbra Streisands and Andy Williamses, replacing them with Carole Kings and Elton Johns. The process was slow and unannounced—Layng and Marshall didn't want to lose any listeners they already had—but ruthless and inexorable. By 1973, when Layng left to manage another station, they had created what Marshall calls a fully contemporary station. The mellow sound was born.

Although their sound evolved from a middle-of-the-road format, Layng and Marshall were not really middle-of-the-road people. They'd entered college together in '61; Layng was into classical music, but Marshall liked a lot of late-sixties groups—Simon & Garfunkel, the Beatles, Crosby, Stills & Nash. He didn't go in for the hard stuff, however. "I did a lot of dial-twisting to find material I was interested in," he says. "Later I realized there must be an awful lot of people my age who feel the same way."

Marshall's triumph lay in locating them. He had to break some rules to do it, particularly the rule about basing your programming judgments on objective evidence. A lot of subjective decisions are required in a soft-rock format; you don't play a song because of chart action or record sales, but because it sounds right. This kind of intuitive decision making is not the norm in broadcasting. "Most people won't make a decision without 30 reels of computer printout to back them up," Marshall declares. "But we feel the old-fashioned concepts of judgment are appropriate—because ultimately the station is judged by people just like us."

While Marshall and Layng were streamlining MOR on the west coast, a Philadelphia boy named Dave Klahr was contemporizing it on the east. Klahr actually began in 1969 with a Philly station called WFIL, but in '72 it was sold; the new management changed the call letters and went progressive rock. Klahr took his "soft contemporary" sound to Boston's WEEI, where it achieved modest commercial success but little industry recognition. Before long, he returned to Philadelphia to direct WMGK, a new station whose market research had uncovered a soft-rock void on the FM dial. This time it clicked. The "magic music" of WMGK—"contemporary format, definitely on the easy side"—went directly to the top.

WMGK went on the air in September 1975, three months after WKTU in New York. Klahr's magic spread to Detroit the following April, when WMGK's parent company put WMJC on the air. Then the other CBS-owned stations started going soft—WBBM in Chicago, WEEI in Boston, KMOX in St. Louis, KCBS in San Francisco, until only two holdouts were left. NBC entered the competition with WYNY in New York. Syndicators plugged in with canned programming for stations in small and medium-sized cities across the country. The rush was on.

"This could signal the start of a mellow rhythm-and-blues format, or a mellow country format," Marshall says of his innovation. "All sorts of variations could be done. But nobody's working on that now. Instead of saying, 'Hey, there's a market for new and original ideas,' everybody's trying to copy this one."

"We appeal to a very upscale, better-educated, 25-to-34-year-old lifestyle listener," says Bob Cole, FM Group vice-president at CBS. "That's what we set out to do, and we've succeeded." Cole, who's 50, has been in charge of the network's FM properties since 1969; he thinks soft rock has made him feel young again. Except for KNX, it's too early to tell if it's done as much for his stations—but they weren't looking very chipper *before* mellow music arrived, either. WBBM, one of Chicago's early rock stations, had been overrun by the competition; KMOX was airing a network-syndicated "young sound" known derisively as "chicken rock"; KCBS had tried everything from hard rock to solid gold and failed with every one. Cole, who says trying a new format is like throwing something against the wall to see if it sticks, is delighted with this one. He calls it the progressive format of the seventies.

Actually, *two* youth-oriented formats have emerged so far this decade: the other is disco. From the broadcaster's viewpoint, however, disco has problems that soft rock doesn't. Marshall: "Disco would tend to have a greater *black* appeal than the mellow format." Dick Drury of Bonneville Broadcast Consultants, a New Jersey-based syndication outfit: "We did research into how many soft-rock listeners are employed or unemployed as opposed to listeners in a disco format. We discovered that disco has its basic appeal to lower-income ethnic groups. Also, the majority of college students did not like disco stations. They knew they existed, but they felt they were just too commercial."

The mellow sound is geared to the ears of those young people who enjoy "an aware, hip, adult lifestyle"—career-minded folks with above-average income and education. "You don't get dumb people listening to this station," says Miller at WKTU. And the 18–34 market is not merely the best—

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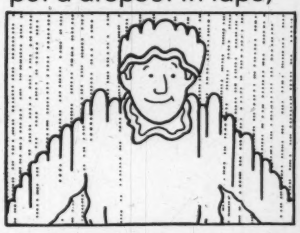

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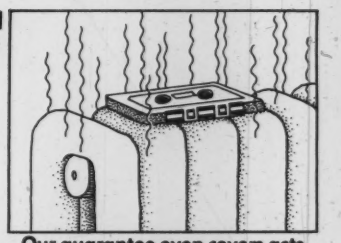

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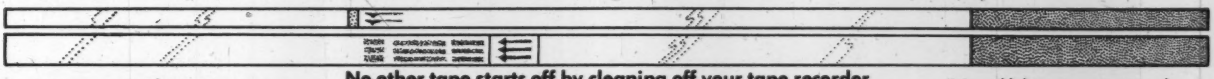

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encompassing (according to a recent NBC research bulletin) 48 percent of the nation's college graduates, 45 percent of its full-time workers, 48 percent of its professional and technical workers, 55 percent of its moviegoers and 59 percent of its heavy fast-food consumers—it is also the biggest, by far.

And the mellow listener is the loyal listener. Bob Cole reports that his CBS stations enjoy an average listening time of five hours on Saturday afternoons. "Some people listen to it all day," he adds excitedly. "We've gotten letters—some people even sleep with the damn thing on." This is all known as long-duration tune-in; it is typical of low-intensity formats. It means people are using the mellow sound as background music.

In radio, the difference between a background sound and a foreground sound is largely a matter of vocals. Top 40, the most aggressive musical format, is also the one with the shrillest crooning and the most excitable deejays. Progressive rock, with its unctuously hip patter and its lengthy instrumental passages, is laid-back by comparison. "Bright" and "traditional" MOR have in common hoary playlists, but are distinguished by the relative presence of their announcers; traditional MOR tends to fade into the woodwork. Beautiful music, at the opposite end of the spectrum from Top 40, is so devoid of vocals it can be used in supermarkets.

There are determinants other than vocal presence, of course. There is the pace of the broadcast, itself determined not only by the beat of the music but also by the amount of dead air between songs. WKTU, which is criticized by its competitors for being overly downbeat, has reportedly allowed as much as five or six seconds to pass in silence. WYNY would never do this; it prides itself on its extremely tight segues and its "matched flow" effect. (Matched flow is a beautiful music concept: songs are matched so that one flows effortlessly into another.) There is, of course, no ready consensus; while Larry Miller describes his station as "elegant," Steve Marshall finds the energy level sub-par at both New York stations. "I don't think mellow means dead," he sniffs.

In some respects, mellow radio could almost be considered revolutionary. It has expanded the FM playlist, which had been shrinking since the demise of the free-form "underground" radio of the late sixties. It may have temporarily shattered the myth of scientific programming, and it has certainly shaken the tyranny of the charts. Since soft-rock programmers don't hesitate to play new artists who work in a laid-back vein, it encourages record companies to take chances on new talent. Unfortunately, it encourages them to take chances only on new talent that conforms to the soft-rock format.

Yet soft-rock programming, like the music itself, is inherently conservative. It is a muted testament to the way styles can change and leave the essence untouched. "We try to provide a beautiful music experience for young people," says 50-year-old Bob Henabery, who developed the Bonneville soft-rock format WYNY is broadcasting.

WYNY program manager Craig Simon thinks he knows why his listeners are eager for that sort of experience. "Maybe after the late sixties, people don't want to be shouted at," he says thoughtfully. "Those were turbulent years—all that marching and protesting. Maybe that's why people like the soft-rock sound right now."

Records

By Jim Miller

★★★ **American Stars 'n Bars,** *Neil Young* (Reprise). Neil Young is hard to figure: once hailed as the man to set Franz Kafka to music, he has dabbled in everything from kitsch to the apocalypse, although distinguishing the two is difficult, as witness his maud-

Neil Young: Sounding *alive*

lin/riveting/preposterous elegy to death by dope, *Tonight's the Night*. Yet while his scratchy warble is, if anything, more irritating than before, Neil Young for the past three albums has sounded *alive*—which is more than can be said for such erstwhile colleagues as Crosby, Stills and Nash.

On side one of *Stars 'n Bars*, our antihero has meandered out on the range, where the cowpoke makes a brave show of sentiment while on the lookout for roaming buffalo. That the frontier has lost its wildlife only makes Young's new West sound like paradise defoliated, an impression strengthened by the herky-jerky diction and heavy-handed irony of the lyrics. The music helps too: it is all barnyard raunch, with fiddle keening, pedal steel careening, and Neil braying like a goat being branded. The cover photo seems apt: Neil shitfaced by a brass spittoon.

Side two contains fragments from a self-portrait, old cuts previously unreleased. Most impressive is "Like a Hurricane," a leaden rocker with a wondrously sputtering guitar solo, as if Young were trying to tear the strings from his instrument. While there is something peculiarly hermetic about this music, it also contains enough honesty, terror and just plain nonsense to command respect: as the man said, "It's a cold bowl of chili when love lets you down."

★★★ **Dogon A.D.,** *Julius Hemphill* (Artista Freedom); ★★★★ **Dancing in Your Head,** *Ornette Coleman* (A&M Horizon). Two outstanding contemporary alto saxophonists in exceptional performances. On Hemphill's title tune, his alto snakes over a primordial riff played by cello and bass, creating a druid bop of haunting proportions; too bad a relatively prosaic flute piece occupies side two. Coleman's first album in five years finds him paired with an effervescent amplified quartet featuring two guitars, bass and drums. As Ornette's alto soars and sings through two lengthy variations on "Theme from a Symphony," the accompanying quartet shakes, rattles but never quite rolls; that forces atten-

Ornette Coleman: Universal sax

tion on Coleman, who manages to shape his sing-song theme (originally "The Good Life" in *Skies of America*) into a personal statement as universal as the blues.

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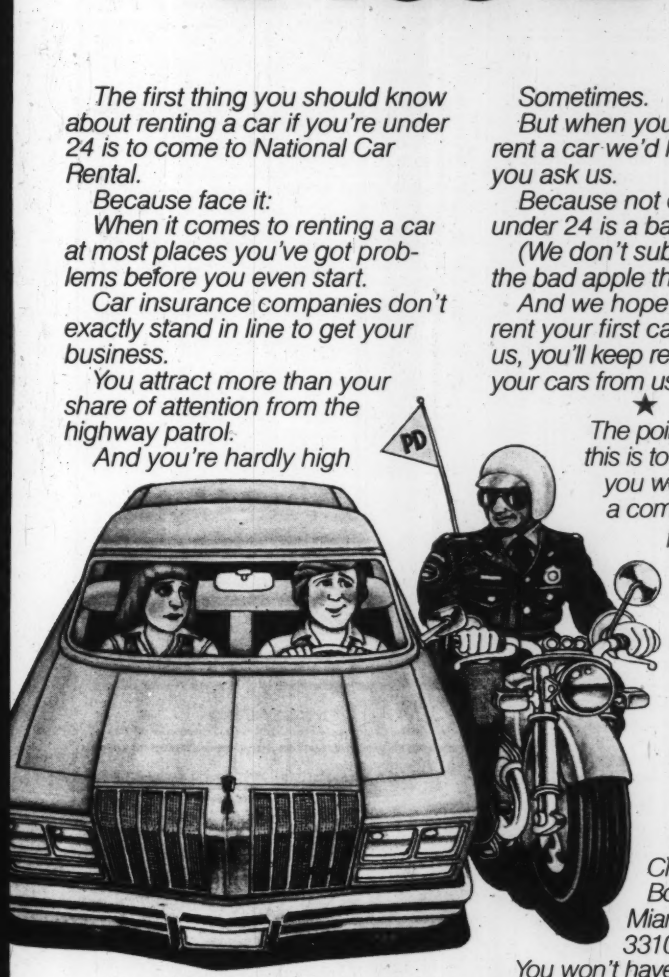

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Rites in a religion of love and death

It's one of the tasks of art to lead us into the depths of experience, and out to the edges. What drives a man to put out his own eyes, or strangle his wife because of a lost handkerchief, or pursue a fatal rendezvous with a white whale? Oedipus, Othello, Ahab—all are human monsters. And, thanks to Sophocles', Shakespeare's, Melville's art, we see what is human about these characters on the precipice of psychosis, and what may be monstrous in us. Now Nagisa Oshima has performed a similar feat of artistic alchemy—transforming animal acts into recognizable human emotions—with **In the Realm of the Senses**. Oshima found his inspiration in an incident that might have come out of the Japanese tabloids: in 1936, a young woman, Sada Abe, was discovered wandering the streets of Tokyo, on her face a rapturous smile, in her hand the severed genitals of the lover she had just killed. Clearly, what attracted Oshima was this strange combination of the beatific and the beastly, and the challenge of tracing the psychopathology that leads a shy young woman into a fatal, consuming passion.

One could weave many variations on this story; several Japanese films had already been based on it before Oshima's. In outline, the plot is *Back Street* rated X. Sada has just come to Tokyo after a brief career as a prostitute in Osaka. There's a rigid class system in the brothel where she's begun working as a maid: the geishas ignore her, and the woman who manages the place treats her with contempt. Only the manager's husband, Kichi, pays any attention to her—but, at first, only as one more impersonal pleasure tool. Sada is used to being used for men's venal, venereal fun and her own small profit, and she dutifully submits to this Oriental Hud. Kichi is an engaging smart-ass whose work is his play, and Sada's strangely decorous sexual intensity strikes him as funny. Even when their diversions turn into obsession, and the lovers become an item of giggly, outraged gossip among the brothel staff, Kichi rarely loses his smile—amused, a little embarrassed, very pleased—the smile of a cheeky adolescent who finds himself in the middle of his first adult adventure.

For Kichi, submitting totally to a woman's love is sort of *fun*, a new kick, as well as a total-immersion course in the language of sexual passion. For Sada, it's fulfillment—and it liberates her. She had always suggested the image of a quiet, serious schoolgirl whose very unself-consciousness catches your attention from the back row. Now, without losing that special quality, she opens herself to a sense of humor, a childlike playfulness about her own and her lover's bodies. When sexual love is sacred, she comes to believe, nothing that expresses that love can be profane. It is the lovers' triumph (and the film's) that their games never smack of the "performances" characteristic of sex for sale and its aesthetic equivalent, the porno film. They are improvised, and deeply felt, rites in a religion of love—and, ultimately, of death.

Sada's is a desperate, possessive love; it is also very Japanese. Early on, when she sees Kichi and his wife making love, she imagines herself stabbing the wife to death. Later, she extracts his promise—playfully, but at knifepoint—that she can strangle him if he ever again sleeps with his wife. Kichi does (as much to test her word as to satisfy his wife), and Sada does (as much to consummate their love as to keep her word). In this loving murder-suicide, the lovers again triumph. Kichi's death is an act, not of terminal sado-masochism, but of simultaneous surrender to and emancipation from the bonds of love. It is the logical, transcendent end of their affair. And Sada's removing of Kichi's genitals is not mutilation but transfiguration: the sacredness of their love made their bodies holy vessels, and Sada's *memento mori* is a relic she wants to keep forever.

This may sound pretty daft to those of you who haven't seen *In the Realm of the Senses*, or who saw it without coming under its spell. In France, where the film opened last summer after causing a *succès de scandale* at the Cannes Film Festival, Oshima's achievement was widely praised; and the seriousness of his intentions was almost unanimously respected. But when the film was screened for the press at the New York Film Festival in October, it was met with varying degrees of indifference, derision, anger and contempt.

Sada and Kichi: A rare erotic film—it's lovely to look at

There are several reasons for this reaction. America, unlike Japan (and, for that matter, France), has no tradition of serious erotic literature; yoked to our Puritan heritage, we tend to take our sex in sniggers, and to translate the poetic eroticism of other cultures into bawdy limericks. ("There was a young girl from Osaka," etc.) Then again, any artist faces a structural problem in dramatizing obsession: the story must proceed in a straight line toward a predetermined conclusion, but with enough variations to hold our interest; it must be the same, but different. To tell Sada's story demands fidelity to conventions as restrictive as those of the haiku, and it demands something of Oshima's audience as well. Moviegoers who are unaware of, or unreceptive to, the precepts of Japanese culture and society are likely to be bored or bemused by *In the Realm of the Senses*; they may even find the lovers' tragic-heroic commitment stupefyingly silly.

The hell with them, say I. What Lionel Trilling wrote about *Lolita*—that the novel was "not about sex but about love . . . This makes it unique in my experience of contemporary novels"—can be applied to Oshima's film. It is about sex *and* about love; and it is both very loving and very sexy. Up until the end (when Sada's severing of Kichi's penis is shown, unnecessarily, in closeup), Oshima maintains a proper moral and spatial distance from his characters: morally because he presents Sada and Kichi neither as "role models" nor as degenerates; spatially because he frames them mostly in medium shot, which avoids the textbook impersonality of sexploitation closeups even as it establishes the integrity of the lovers' bodies and souls. Perhaps because of this (and because Eiko Matsuda, as Sada, and Tatsuya Fuji, as Kichi, "act" so beautifully through their young, thin, strong bodies), I find *In the Realm of the Senses* one of those rare erotic films whose sex scenes are essential and expressive, and also lovely to look at. Oshima may be challenging American audiences with the documentary rigor of his film's hard-core sex; more crucially, he is asking us to confront—as Sada and Kichi do—the joy and pain of physical love. If we can follow them through their convulsive passions, we may realize that *In the Realm of the Senses* is not a window onto an exotic *Psychopathia Sexualis*, but a mirror of the angelic beast in all of us.

Another cinematic *scandale*—though hardly a *succès*—accompanied the American premiere of Luchino Visconti's **Conversation Piece,** when a well-dressed opening-night audience at the 1975 New York Film Festival hooted and jeered through the screening like a roomful of Rotarians watching an old stag movie. The evening has since achieved an almost legendary status—for the noise made by what critic Elliott Stein called "a black-tie-and-evening-dress lynch mob," rather than for the film itself. That's a shame, because the notoriety deprived Visconti's gentle, serious comedy of a chance to reach, and touch, a wider audience. Now, with the theatrical release of *Conversation Piece* (and with English subtitles for Italian dialogue, instead of the admittedly stilted English-language track that provoked so much of the original hilarity), the film and the American moviegoing public can meet on more hospitable terms. I hope its the beginning of a beautiful friendship.

A conversation piece, in the language of art history, is a painting of a group of upper-class people in upper-class surroundings. The genre was popular in the 18th century, and Visconti's adaptation of its style and sense may seem no less anachronistic; moviemakers have long since deserted the drawing room to hit the road or the sack. But there's a repressed, claustrophobic humidity in the Roman apartment where the film takes place; and there's an emotional combustion struck when a staid old art collector (played marvelously by Burt Lancaster) is sparked first to anger, and then to life, by a family of jet-set zanies who move in with him. As incarnated by Silvana Mangano (the mother) and Helmut Berger (her young lover), the intruders come on as vain, silly, arrogant—yet they have an openness to experience that the old man has never allowed himself. As he comes to accept, for the first time, the excitement of living, he can now prepare himself for his imminent death; and the movie can begin its graceful shift from a comedy of manners to a meditation on morality.

Visconti's films frequently dealt with the innocence of sexual obsession, from his first film (*Ossessione*) to his last (*L'Innocente*, completed just before his death last year, and still unreleased in the U.S.). The relationship between Lancaster and Berger is more father-son than lover-stud, but *Conversation Piece* still ranks as one of the director's most personal—and his most perfectly achieved. The art collector's confinement of necessity reflected Visconti's: he had suffered a stroke before the film began shooting, and directed from a wheelchair. Maybe it's sentimental to believe that Visconti's own intimations of mortality gave him the insight and urgency that the film reflects. But I can't help seeing *Conversation Piece* as an eloquent memorial to Visconti's career—and its tardy release as a last chance for audiences to atone for the premature desecration of that monument.

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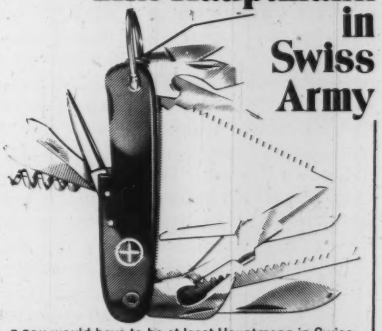

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Paul Krassner writes again/By Paul Krassner

Final Tribute

"Always stay in your own movie."
—Ken Kesey

My first real hero was Mortimer Snerd. It was because of a question he had posed. Edgar Bergen asked Charlie McCarthy, "What are you doing, Charlie?"—only in this land of opportunity could a ventriloquist have his own radio show—and Charlie answered, "Nothing." Mortimer piped up in his goofy voice: "Well, then how do you know when you're finished?" Out of the mouths of dummies come Zen koans.

But the name of Mortimer Snerd was not mentioned by a single panelist at "The American Hero: Myths & Media"—a five-day symposium held last month in Sun Valley, Idaho. I was put up in a $52-a-day room with no clock or TV or radio. My window looked out on an ice-skating rink. It was like waking up to an animated Hallmark Christmas card. My assignment was to deliver the keynote address: "The Heroism of Failure: Whatever Happened to the Heroes of the '60s?"

The first person who came to mind isn't a sixties hero at all. Remember the guy whose car crashed into Gerald Ford's car in 1976 when the president was campaigning in Connecticut? Well, he was asked to stand up in the audience of Howard Cosell's short-lived variety show (Cosell lacks Ed Sullivan's warmth). The audience hesitated just a beat before they applauded spontaneously, realizing that it was all right to clap because this guy *had not succeeded* in killing then-President Ford. Squeaky Fromme and Sara Jane Moore both failed in their attempts to kill Ford, yet neither of *them* was invited to stand in the audience of the Howard Cosell show. An audience will applaud for the perpetrator of an accident, but not if you shoot at somebody on purpose.

Which brings us back to the sixties. My qualifications to orate on that decade's heroes are summarized in an October 1968 memorandum from the New York Office of the FBI to the Director's Office in Washington, requesting Bureau authority to send a phony letter to the editors of *Life* calling me "the cuckoo editor of an unimportant, smutty little rag" plus "a raving, unconfined nut."

An accurate appraisal, certainly, but the reason J. Edgar Hoover's assistants, Cartha DeLoach and William Sullivan, granted permission is explained in a return memo: "Krassner is editor of *The Realist* and is one of the moving forces behind the Youth International Party, commonly known as the Yippies. Krassner is a spokesman for the New Left. *Life* magazine recently ran an article favorable to him. . . . This letter could, if printed by *Life*, call attention to the unsavory character of Krassner."

And whatever happened to all the other moving forces and unsavory characters? Jerry Rubin has become a growth-movement junkie. He put out a press release asking not to be referred to any longer as a former Yippie leader. This was filed away along with an official American Legion request that the media say Philadelphia Respiratory

PHOTOGRAPH BY RICK SMOLAN/FPG

Disease instead of Legionnaire's Disease.

Abbie Hoffman made the mistake of introducing one individual who wanted to buy coke to another who wanted to sell, they both turned out to be cops, Abbie got busted and went underground ("I got caught behind enemy lines without proper identification").

Tom Hayden was last seen together with Marshal Ky watching the Nixon interview on television. Rennie Davis has gone from doing PR for a teenage Indian guru to selling insurance; trading pie in the sky for a piece of the rock.

Bobby Seale, unshackled from his courtroom chair, became a standup comic in night clubs. Huey Newton became a Cuban exchange student.

Beatles music is now leaked into office-building elevators by Muzak. The Haight-Ashbury Diggers' slogan—"Today is the first day of the rest of your life"—has been co-opted by a TV commercial for Total breakfast cereal. Allen Cohen, an editor of the original psychedelic tabloid *The San Francisco Oracle* changed his name to Siddartha, only to have people keep calling him Sid.

Richard Alpert became Baba Ram Dass, Cassius Clay became Muhammad Ali, Hugh Romney became Wavy Gravy, LeRoi Jones became Amari Baraka and John F. Kennedy became an airport.

Martin Luther King is a library. Malcolm X is a park.

Negroes became blacks, beatniks became hippies, girls became women, closets became empty.

Toothpaste became dental cream, ghetto slums became inner cities, pot became grass, Esso became Exxon, concentration camps became strategic hamlets, bombing raids became protective reaction.

Phil Ochs is gone but his *The Power and the Glory* spins on in an album of patriotic songs by a former Miss America, Anita Bryant, who now places the blame for a hurricane off the coast of Florida on the presence of Tennessee Williams.

The FBI misinformed Eldridge Cleaver in Algeria that Timothy Leary was a CIA operative, causing a slight strain in their camaraderie. But now they have a symbiotic relationship again. Cleaver is warning folks that the world is coming to an end, while Leary is saying that we better get off this planet fast. Yup, ol' Whitey is gettin' ready to leave the earth and go live on suburban space shuttles because colored Jesus freaks is movin' into de neighborhood!

(The Heroes Conference has not neglected minorities. There is an Indian [Barney Old Coyote], an Oriental [Ben Fong-Torres], a lesbian-feminist [Kate Millett] and two blacks [Julian Bond and Roger Mosley]. It is as though Lenny Bruce's notorious poker hand had come alive: "Okay, we got one redskin, one chink, one dyke and a pair of spades. . . . ")

Perhaps the last word on what happened to the sixties, if not to its heroes, came at the conference from a seventies star, former child evangelist Marjoe Gortner. Leary approached him and asked if he's searching for something. "No," replied Marjoe, "not particularly."●

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